TSV BOOKS

DOCTOR WHO

AND THE CITY OF DEATH

DAVID LAWRENCE

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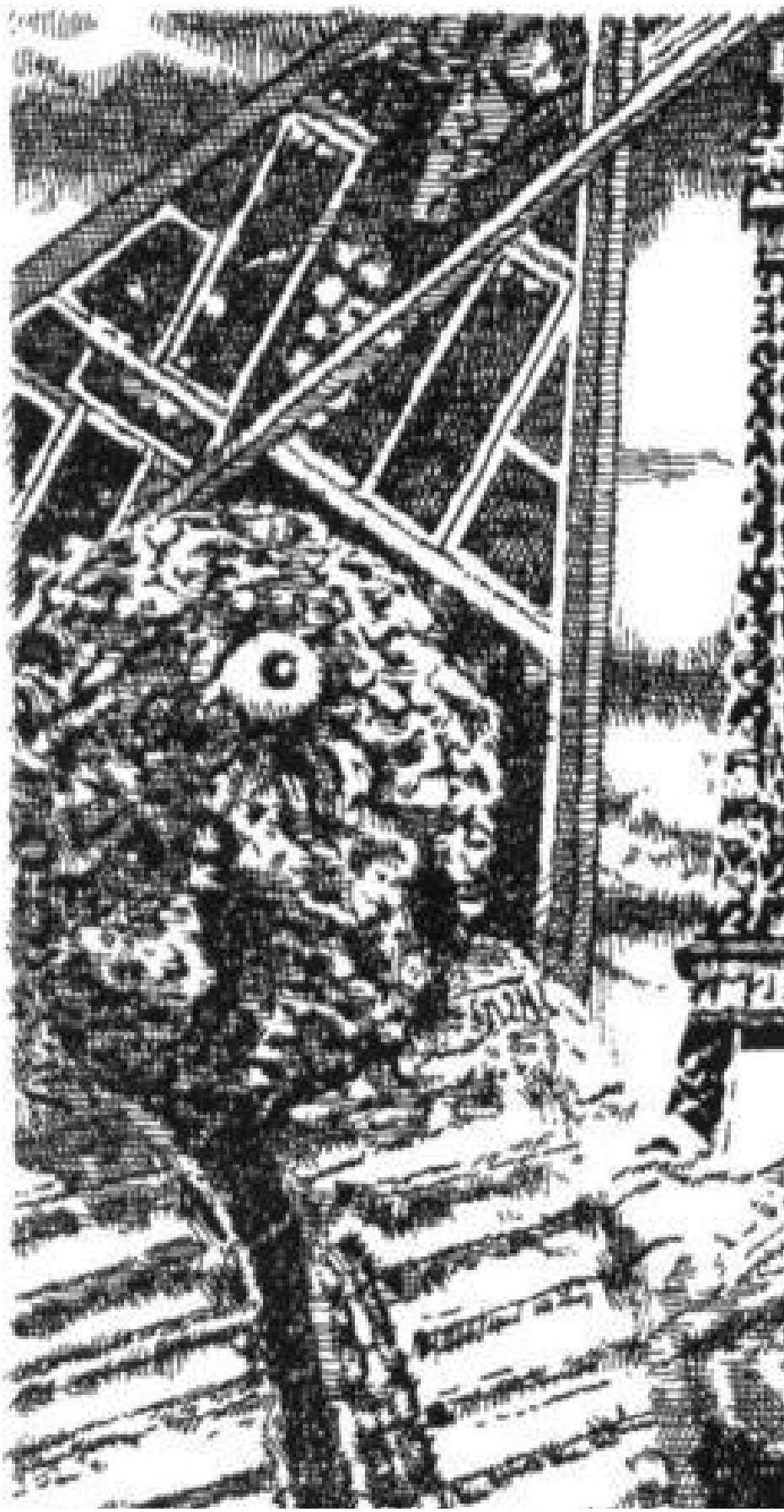

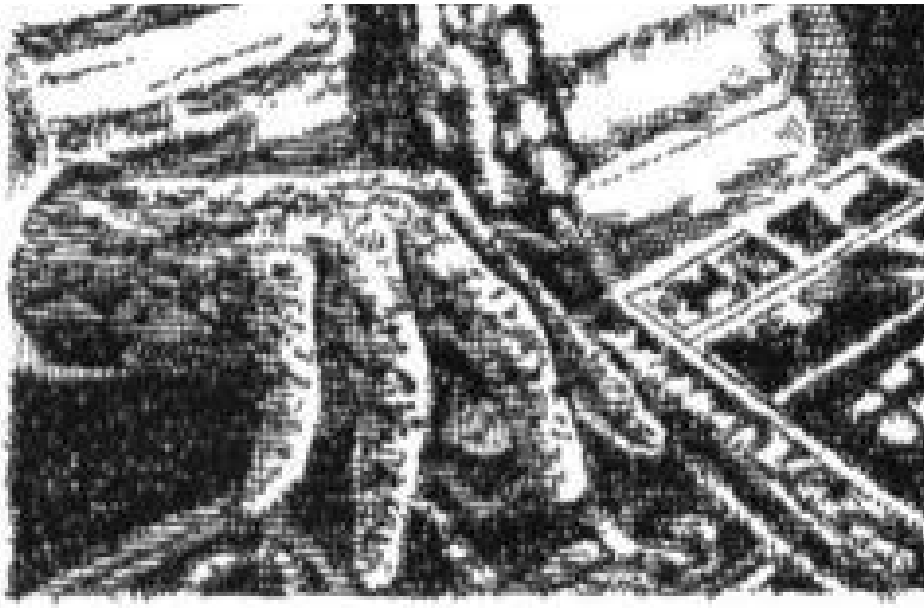

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DOCTOR WHO

AND THE

CITY OF DEATH

A TSV BOOK
Based on the BBC television serial by David Agnew DAVID LAWRENCE
published by

the New Zealand

Doctor Who Fan Club

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A TSV Book

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Dedication

“Horatio, thou art e’en as just a man

As e’er my conversation coped withal”

for David Ronayne

and with love to Orlando, Oliver & Gretal

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Author's Note

The first time I novelized City of Death I was 12 years old. It was reliant largely on my memory of the recent television repeat. I typed it up on a hefty old Imperial typewriter and sent it to Target Books. Their rejection letter ran something along the lines of "You obviously know nothing about the copyright problems surrounding this particular Doctor Who story and we also have strong suspicions that you may only be 12 years old and not a proper writer!"

My third rewrite was submitted to TSV in 1990. The version that was published in 1992

differed considerably from the submitted manuscript for several reasons, chiefly that Paul Scoones and I had at the time very different agendas. Paul's was that TSV Books should produce accurate representations of the television stories - back then the prospect of most of the series becoming available on commercial video was not a strong one - whereas mine was to write the kind of novelisation I thought Douglas Adams would have delivered had he ever deemed to do City of Death himself. To this end there were numerous digressions from the plot and sections consisting of the kind of flogging-a-dead-horse humour that per-meates The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy. All of these sections were omitted from the published book.

When last year Paul offered me the opportunity to revise the book before its reprint, the obvious thought for both of us was to reinstate some of the cut material. Upon re-reading the 1990 manuscript I decided that, while I'm still fond of it, it's not really the way I write anymore and the articles I wrote on Virgin's New Adventures series for TSV made me consider other possibilities - so rather than a revision, this is essentially a totally new novelisation. People familiar with those New Adventures articles will doubtless be amused by how many of my own bugbears I'm guilty of, just as people familiar with the 1990 manuscript may lament my decision not to run with it this time around (although I did reinstate one scene - see if you can guess which one it is!). I quite liked the idea of printing it in reduced facsimile form at the back of the book in the way that the Arden 3 editions of Shakespeare's plays reproduce corrupt Quarto texts in their appendices… but as work commit-ments and a hard-drive crash delayed

the revisions to City of Death further and further, the challenge became just finding the time to actually get it done as opposed to being ground-breaking and revolutionary with the finished product.

The bulk of this version was completed during time out from rehearsals for my February/March 2002 production of Hamlet in Wellington, which may explain the numerous Shakespearean allusions. I'd like to thank Paul for his extreme patience in light of my Douglas Adams-like approach to deadlines and for his guidance and support over the years. Jon Preddle supplied a vast amount of reference material last time around and I should also thank those present when we lunched just after Christmas 2001, an afternoon that went a long way towards providing ideas and enthusiasm for what could well be my final attempt at getting City of Death on paper.

David Lawrence

March 2002.

Prologue

Once upon a time, high in the southern mountains of Gallifrey during a season in which no snowflakes fell nor owls watched, a young boy evaded his tutors for what seemed like the thousandth time and escaped out into the wilderness. Outside the sky was a deep blue and the grass an emerald green. Night had departed but if one looked closely at the skyline they might still glimpse the far off moons and stars in a universe young and innocent. The elements ruffled the boy's hair and plucked at his clothes as he ventured up the side of the wind-swept mountain.

He wasn't supposed to be there - no one was. His tutors always knew where he was going even if they never quite managed to anticipate his latest ruse or trick to get them otherwise occupied. No one was supposed to leave the House, unless to venture to the Capitol, but there were those who could no longer stand the dreariness and boredom and simply had to escape outside, even if only a few hours passed before they slipped back in again undetected.

And then there were those who elected to remain outside permanently, to fend for themselves rather than rely on machines to do everything for them. The idea of such an existence mortified the Cousins, but the boy knew where he'd rather be given the choice.

The hermit was in his usual place, sitting on a rock outside a cave some way up the mountainside. He was immeasurably old, yet still seemed to be full of as much life and se-renity as the Cousins were reticent and irritable. He had lived in this spot for as long as any could remember and long before the boy's first illicit journey outside.

He approached the ancient robed figure with a sigh and sat down on the grass beside the rock. The old man, as he always did, seemed not to have seen him approaching, as though he were preoccupied with some higher purpose. But as soon as the boy was seated, he drew back his hood and smiled. 'Good morning, my child,' he said, his calmness and warmth instantly dissipating the boy's anger and frustration. 'Shouldn't you be in school?'

'Yes,' the boy confessed.

The smile gave way to a stern frown. 'Then why aren't you there?'

'Because I'd rather come and talk to you,' said the boy defiantly. 'Besides, no one will miss me there. They're just filling my head with a whole load of useless rubbish. You're much more interesting than boring old Quences.'

'Is that so?' The old man chuckled. 'I don't think Quences would be too happy to hear you say a thing like that.' Nevertheless, he reached out a gnarled hand to pat the boy on the head. 'What do you want to talk about today?'

'Tell me another horror story.'

The old man noted the determination in the boy's voice. 'You do take my stories seriously don't you?' he frowned. 'You are aware that the things I tell you are true, aren't you?'

'Yes,' the boy replied with sincerity.

'Good,' murmured the old man. After a moment's contemplation, he spoke again. 'Do 5

you know,' he asked carefully, 'what they call me back in the city?'

The boy shook his head.

'Some of them call me 'The Old One', which I can understand,' the man said with a chuckle. 'But the majority of them think I'm mad. 'K'anpo the Insane', that's what they call me. The hypocrites. They claim I make all these stories up, and yet it was they who gave me access to all this knowledge in the first place.'

'They never call you that!' protested the boy.

'There's no need to lie to me, child. Don't your parents say, 'Keep away from K'anpo, he's just a crazy old man'?'

There was a pause before the boy spoke. 'My parents are dead,' he said, his voice a quiet whisper.

'I'm sorry,' said K'anpo. 'I'd forgotten. Forgive an old man whose memory deserts him now and then.' The boy looked up at him and his clouded features broke into a smile again. It was impossible to be mad at someone with K'anpo's wisdom and gentleness. 'I can tell you in infinite detail of things that happened a thousand years ago, and yet I cannot retain things from the here and now. When you reach my age perhaps you'll understand.'

'Tell me a story,' the boy reminded him. 'One with vampires in it.'

'Aren't you tired of vampire stories?' K'anpo asked. 'I certainly am. Believe me, although our people may seem indifferent and inactive, in our heyday we were responsible for some of the worst atrocities the universe will ever know. It pains me to think of how heedlessly Gallifrey has behaved in the times of old. Just as it reassures me to know that elsewhere in the universe, pain and suffering exists that was not inflicted by Rassilon and his foolish acolytes.' He drew in a deep breath and as he exhaled he broke into a smile.

The boy knew that smile. It was the smile that meant that, in spite of what Quences and his tutors might intend, today was going to be a good day.

'Today,' said K'anpo at last, 'I will tell you of a tragic war that led to the death of an entire race, as well as the birth of an entire other race.'

‘No vampires?’ asked the boy, trying not to seem disappointed.

‘The race in question were creatures called the Jagaroth. They were bipedal life forms, like you and I. Only they were also reptilian and were covered from head to foot in green scales and they only had one eye.’

‘One eye?’

‘Yes, one large green eye in the centre of their heads. And they also had the peculiar ability to grow a second skin over their bodies mimicking whatever race they happened to encounter.’

‘What would they need a thing like that for?’ the boy asked, bewildered.

‘Who knows why war-mongering races develop such talents?’ shrugged K’anpo. ‘Once the Jagaroth were a proud and majestic race of scientists and scholars. But, like most supposedly civilised peoples - look at our own - they degenerated into pointless squabbling and bickering. What began as a political disagreement turned into a civil war that eventually ravaged the entire planet and wiped out the whole race.’

‘What happened?’ whispered the boy, already intently engaged in the tale.

‘During the war,’ said K’anpo gravely, ‘one side made a fatal error. They thought the introduction of biological warfare would turn the battle to their advantage. They developed a bacteriological weapon which they hoped would end the war. They were right. For they severely underestimated the strength of the weapon they had created, and within hours of unleashing it every last Jagaroth on the home world had been destroyed. This lethal plague decimated the planet and rendered it uninhabitable for a millennia.’

‘So they were all destroyed?’

‘Not quite. One small group of Jagaroth escaped the plague. They had been away from the home world on an exploration mission deep into space. When they returned, they were devastated. They had not seen the home world for years, their supplies were all but exhausted and their ship was in urgent need of repair after the long mission. The ion-drive engine needed to be replaced before further space journey would be safe.’

‘What did they do?’

‘Their pilot, Scaroth, was a brilliant astrophysicist. He was able to keep the ship intact until they made planet fall elsewhere. But the chances of them finding a hospitable place of landing were slim. They arrived on a desolate, waste of a planet, large enough to contain life and yet far too barren to support it. This planet, which had looked so promising and inviting from space, had proven to be lifeless and inhospitable. But the

craft's over-stressed thrust motors had been damaged beyond repair on landing.' The old man paused for a moment, his tone lowered and he allowed a sad smile. 'Poor Scaroth. What could he do? He knew that none of them would survive if they tried to remain on this planet, but he knew that their ship would be unlikely to survive another take-off. The fate of the Jagaroth was in his hands.'

The boy could imagine it clearly. There was something about the way K'anpo could tell a tale that enabled him to visualize things as though he had been there himself. He closed his eyes and he could see Scaroth, seated at the flight controls in the cramped cockpit of the battered, ancient spacecraft. He could feel the torment raging within Scaroth as the one-eyed reptilian creature agonized over the decision that would seal the fate of his race.

'He decided they should leave the planet. They managed to get some residual power, just enough to start the engines,' K'anpo continued, 'but it was not enough. The warp fields destabilized within moments of the Jagaroth ship lifting off, and they were all destroyed.'

'Poor Scaroth,' murmured the boy, echoing K'anpo's own words. 'Is that the end of the story?'

'Of course not,' said the old man. 'Because Scaroth's sacrifice led to the creation of another race. Another proud and majestic race of scientists and scholars. And artists. The intense radiation from the ship's destruction somehow fertilized the amino acids that bubbled on the planet's surface and caused the beginning of life on this young world.'

'What about the Jagaroth?'

'They were never heard of again,' said the old man, 'until now.' He paused and frowned. 'Must you tap your lapels like that? It's very irritating.'

'I'm sorry,' said the boy, unaware he'd been doing it.

'That could turn into the most annoying habit,' cautioned K'anpo.

'What happened to the other race? The scientists and scholars and artists?'

K'anpo nodded. 'Ah, yes, the artists. Well, this race lived to a mighty age. Their science and scholarship varied greatly from time to time, but as artists…' As his voice drifted off his face broke into a vast, conspiratorial smile. 'Well, let's just say they could teach the Cousins a few lessons…'

1

We'll Always Have Paris

'What would you do,' asked Leonardo da Vinci suddenly, 'if you had a time machine?'

There was a moment of silence. The question had changed the direction of the conversation considerably. Hangovers aside, no one could come up with an immediate answer.

'Come on,' sighed Leonardo. 'Surely it's an obvious question? Have you never thought about it before?'

'It's like asking what you'd do if you won a million dollars,' mused Napoleon.

'Everyone always wishes they would, but you ask anyone what they'd spend the money on, and they're stumped for an answer.'

The studio was a mess. It was 1503 and they were in Florence, only Leonardo kept insisting they call it Firenze, which was its proper Italian name. The party they'd had last night could probably have been heard in Roma.

The sun was streaming through the studio windows. Even though it was well past lunchtime, many of last night's revellers were still asleep or, more likely, still unconscious.

But Leonardo, who had hosted the birthday celebrations, had been leisurely with his alco-hol intake and had wisely avoided going anywhere near the Venusian brandy. Mozart hadn't returned after declaring loudly just before midnight that he was 'going into town' and William Blake was looking distinctly worse for wear, vowing he was never going to drink again. But Leonardo was full of energy and had been hard at work since early that morning.

'If I had a time machine,' said Thomas Chippendale, 'I'd go into the future, buy up all the cheap leather I could, and bring it back with me. Then I could lower my prices.'

'Bloody liberal,' scowled Shakespeare.

'Lower my prices so I could sell more chairs,' protested Thomas, and the others all smiled and nodded approvingly. Shakespeare apologized.

'If I had a time machine,' said Dickens, 'I would go a hundred years into the future and meet my great grandchildren.'

'BOR-ING,' they all chorused.

‘I’d rework copyright legislation so that no one could perform my plays without paying a percentage of the box office into a specially set up bank account,’ said Shakespeare, ‘and then I’d travel forward to the twentieth century, empty the account, and bring all the money back to the seventeenth century. I’d be a bloody zillionaire!’

‘Is ‘zillionaire’ a real word?’ pondered Homer.

‘I just made it up,’ shrugged Will, and then he wrote it in his little notebook with all his other inventions of vocabulary. ‘What about you, birthday boy?’

‘Ah…well…’ The Doctor tilted his head to the side and looked quizzical. ‘I don’t really know if I should be allowed to participate in this discussion.’

‘Answer the question!’

‘Well,’ said the Doctor, tongue in cheek, ‘perhaps I’d try to assemble a group of famous 8

artists from all throughout time, find a nice spot somewhere in history and spend an evening with them celebrating and debating and enjoying their company?’ There were guf-faws of laughter from the assembled company.

‘What about him?’ scoffed Will, pointing at Napoleon. ‘He’s no artist!’

‘I’ve turned war into an art,’ Napoleon said lamely, ignoring the sniggering.

‘It can’t be the same when time travelling is your occupation,’ said Dickens to the Doctor. ‘There’s nothing novel about it for you. You can do what you like, go wherever you like.’

‘Not at the moment,’ replied the Doctor. ‘I’m on holiday, I’ve decided. For the next month I’m doing nothing. I’ve broken enough laws of Time just in having this party. And besides, I wouldn’t call time travelling an occupation. It’s a vocation, if anything. Like art.’

‘If I paint a house, then it’s an occupation,’ said Leonardo as he chose a finer brush and pondered over the choice of colour. ‘And this kind of stuff, painting to order - that’s occupational, I suppose. I’m doing it to pay the rent, not because of any great artistic calling.

But I still enjoy it.’

‘I’d travel forward into the future,’ said Homer, ‘get copies of the current translation of The Iliad and take them back home with me. Not only would it be proof of my immortal-ity, but it would mean I wouldn’t have to worry about remembering the whole story every time I tell it. I could just refer to the text, instead of having to do the whole storytelling number.’

‘Good idea,’ enthused Basho and Krishna.

‘I’d want to visit Paris,’ said Napoleon, and they all sighed affectionately.

‘The City of Life,’ smiled Leonardo.

‘The City of Light,’ smiled Michelangelo.

‘The City of Love,’ smiled Rostand.

‘The City of Wine,’ smiled Shakespeare, and everyone cheered.

‘I want to see it when I’ve conquered it,’ Napoleon continued, ‘and turned it into a city that celebrates Art. Because that’s what I’ll do. Build museums and galleries, and plunder all the riches and treasures of the world and store them there. That way all the great artists and all the great artwork won’t be scattered throughout time and space. Everything will be in Paris. It will become the Eternal City.’ Everyone tried to sound impressed. ‘What do you think, Leonardo?’ asked Napoleon. ‘Where would you rather see your stuff displayed?

In Paris, or here in boring old Firenze?’

Leonardo stared at the canvas in front of him, and then at the subject of his painting again. He’d come to a halt and was thinking seriously about his own question. ‘What I’d really like to do,’ he said at last, ‘is go into the future and see if all this was worth it. Find out what people really thought - see if my paintings really are any good, or find out if human beings ever actually create flying machines, or visit the stars…I wish sometimes you could tell us a bit more than you ever do, Doctor.’

‘It’s far too early in the day to be so philosophical and serious,’ smirked Sophocles.

‘And why does everyone want to go into the future? Wouldn’t anyone like to visit the past? What about you, Lisa?’

‘Visit the past?’ answered the subject of Leonardo’s work-in-progress. ‘Bugger off!’

‘Where would you go, then?’ Leonardo asked.

Lisa del Giocondo answered without hesitation. ‘To any point in the future when you’ve managed to finish this stupid painting. My arse is bloody killing me!’

It might have been good enough for Napoleon, but if there was one place Detective Ser-9

geant James Duggan did not want to be, it was Paris.

Mind you, he thought as he stared at the ceiling of his hundred-franc-per night hotel room, it was all very well for Bonaparte. He got to have processions, festivals, fanfares and the beautiful Josephine on his arm. He got to plunder the city’s riches, feast on its food and swim in its wine. He didn’t get paper-thin walls, cockroaches and a totally

bewildering underground system. Duggan hated the food, hated the wine, hated the coffee and the artwork bewildered him. After a month in Paris, a month in this lousy hotel, the only things he could appreciate about the world were that it was May 1979 and it was raining.

Duggan's career with the London Metropolitan Police force had not turned out to be the success he'd hoped for. His preferred method of investigation was to hit first and ask questions later. This invariably got results, but sometimes innocent people got hurt, and it was for this reason that his superiors had advised him to retire from the police work at the age of thirty-five. It had seemed that the world in which he'd joined the police force, where a criminal was guilty until proven Irish until an ignorant jury decided otherwise, had changed and no one wanted policemen to be the figures of power and authority they had once been.

After leaving the force, Duggan spent two years drifting in and out of jobs. After a month of sitting alone night after night in his Willesden Green bed sit, knocking back the whiskey, he eventually accepted that the police force was not the job for him. He took on a job as a hotel porter, working through the night and earning a terrible hourly wage. Then he cleaned out chicken sheds for a better wage, but one which seemed to be entirely blown on the two hours' daily commuting out to the residence of his employer. His big break came when he was employed as bodyguard to a Sultan who spent a lot of time in London, bringing his sisters, brothers, wives and cousins with him wherever he went. Quite what Duggan was supposed to do should anyone actually pose a threat to the family was never established, but they gave him a gun and an enormous amount of ready money for his ser-vice. He was devastated when, in a misunderstanding with a hotel porter which ended with undelivered luggage and the porter unconscious, the Sultan terminated his employment.

He then worked for a law firm as a divorce investigator - which did not entail physical violence - with the exception of one particular case. Whilst watching the central London flat where Percival Malfont-Blosse was suspected to be having regular lunchtime meetings with his vivacious secretary, he had been confronted by Malfont-Blosse himself, and a scene had ensued. Duggan had reacted in the best way he knew how. Percival had ended up in hospital with a fractured nose, and Duggan had been fired. Veronica Malfont-Blosse, who had for a long time wanted proof of her husband's illicit liaisons, was delighted. So delighted, in fact, that when the British Art Society of which she was chairperson, decided to hire a private detective to investigate the mystery of reappearing art treasures in France, the ex-Mrs. Malfont-Blosse knew just the man for the job.

They'd paid his economy fare, they were paying for his lousy hotel and his dreadful meals and the foul coffee, with a guarantee of massive financial remuneration when he was able to unravel the mystery for them. The problem was that he was too ignorant of art to be able to infiltrate the buying and selling ring, so he'd had to rely on good old-fashioned snooping and surveillance, in the hope that he could catch them, whoever they were, in the act.

He let out a groan as the alarm beside the bed rang. He was sick of Paris and sick of this frustrating assignment.

It might, in retrospect, have seemed an oversight that no tourist guides to the best galleries in Paris mentioned the château of Count Carlos Feresdon de Puisson Scarlioni. Travellers 10

armed with their trusty Lonely Planets and their Rough Guides usually made notes as to which paintings or sculptures were housed in which European museums or galleries and the most pedantic of art students ticked off each masterpiece as they located and saw it.

You could rest assured that if you couldn't find that particular vase or print anywhere, no matter how many text books you'd seen it in, chances were the Count Scarlioni owned it.

The château itself was a minor work of art. Five hundred years old, it had once been the Paris residence of Lucretia and Cesare Borgia, the renowned Italian sadists who loved a decent holiday in France whenever they needed a rest from all the murdering and torturing.

The Borgias were hardly interested in art, but once Lucretia shuffled off her mortal coil one sunny afternoon in 1519, twelve years after killing her beloved Cesare, the château seemed to have passed through a succession of mysterious owners who kept quietly to themselves. Families who had lived in the same affluent area for generations could not claim to have ever been invited inside, nor seen much of whichever current owner was in residence. A two metre high security fence surrounded the perimeter of the house and only one entrance, two huge iron doors with a decidedly gothic engraving of the screaming face of a snake-haired woman, broke the austerity of the impregnable exterior. Once through the double doors a magnificent courtyard led across to the entrance to the house. The house was well surrounded by shrubbery and foliage. The Scarlionis liked their privacy.

Professor Kerensky had decided they liked their privacy too much. He sighed as he found himself descending the staircase into the château's cellar yet again. He was tired. He was miserable. He had not seen genuine daylight for weeks. It seemed, he had often thought over the period of his employment with the Count, that once you were inside the château, you weren't allowed out again until your work was done.

'I can proceed no further, Count!' he announced. They were words he had been rehears-ing since waking up. Today was the day, he had decided, that he finally gave the Count an ultimatum. He was not a naturally aggressive man - if anything, he had a predisposition to being nervous and he found himself instantly regretting every word he spoke. 'Research costs money. If you want results, we must have the money!'

The Count barely glanced back at him as they reached the bottom of the staircase and entered what was now a converted laboratory. Computer banks lined the walls, chattering away and spooling out a steady stream of information. A large fume cupboard stood in one corner, accompanied by various incubation units. Tables were spread with folders and files full of information and documentation.

In the centre of the laboratory stood a magnificent piece of machinery. It consisted of a metre-square pad in the middle, and protruding from underneath the pad there were three projectors. Each one had two angled joints so that the transparent conical ends of each projector aimed in towards the pad. Standing beside the machine was a plain wooden table upon which were two panels covered with switches and gauges, connected to massive power units that rose from the floor to the ceiling.

Count Scarlioni crossed the laboratory to a table. He looked briefly through an open file before finally looking up to meet Kerensky's angry stare. 'I can assure you, Professor,' he said, 'money is no problem.'

Scarlioni appeared to be in his thirties. He had grey hair, slicked smartly back, and a Cheshire cat-like face. His charming smile seemed winningly designed to succumb others to his will with ease and matched his pale linen suit effortlessly.

Professor Kerensky nodded wearily. 'So you tell me, Count Scarlioni, so you tell me every day. Money is no problem.' He picked up several slips of red paper from the table nearest him and waved them in the air. 'So what do you want me to do with all these equipment invoices? Write 'no problem' on them and send them back?'

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The Count remained calm and reached into his jacket. He produced a fat bundle of bank notes and handed them to the Professor. 'Will a million francs ease the immediate cash flow situation?' he asked casually.

'Yes, Count!' Kerensky said as he stared in wonder at the cash. More money. Where did the Count get it all from? He wagged a finger at the Count as though scolding him.

'But I will shortly need a great deal more!'

Count Scarlioni nodded. 'Yes, of course, Professor. Of course. Nothing must interfere with the work.'

Kerensky shrank away from the Count, looking miserably again at the money and trying to draw his thoughts together as to where today's starting point would be. He should have known that, no matter how worked up he managed to make himself, the Count would disarm the situation just like that and take the wind out of his sails. Soon, he thought, another servant would come to take care of all the contact Kerensky needed with the outside world if he was going to keep to the Count's schedule. He was never, he concluded, going to get out of this wretched château.

A third man came down the steps into the laboratory. Just the sight of Hermann made the Professor shudder. The Count's butler and bodyguard was the tallest, solidest, ugliest man the Professor had ever seen. It was a mark of the Count's wealth, he

thought, that such an ogre could be supplied with such a beautifully-fitting suit. ‘You rang, Excellency?’ he asked in his guttural tones as he approached the Count.

‘Ah, Hermann.’ The Count drew the butler aside out of the Professor’s earshot. ‘That Gainsborough didn’t fetch nearly enough,’ he said in hushed tones. ‘I think we’ll have to sell one of the bibles.’

Hermann frowned. ‘Sir?’

‘Yes,’ mused the Count. ‘The Gutenberg.’

‘May I suggest,’ murmured Hermann, ‘that we tread more carefully, sir? It would not be in our best interests to draw too much attention to ourselves. Another rash of ‘priceless treasures’ on the market…’

‘Yes, I know, Hermann,’ said the Count with a broad smile. ‘Sell it discreetly.’

‘Discreetly?’ Hermann gaped at the Count in disbelief. ‘Sell a Gutenberg bible discreetly?’

The Count shrugged. ‘Well, as discreetly as possible.’ Hermann still looked disapproving, so the Count snapped, ‘Just do it, will you?’ before keeping his temper in check.

Hermann winced at the firm tone, careful as always not to anger his master. ‘Of course, sir,’ he mumbled, bowing in subservience before hurrying back up the staircase.

Scarlioni turned his attention back to Professor Kerensky, who had been busying himself with his equipment, in order to look as though he were not trying to overhear their conversation. ‘Are we ready,’ he enquired, adopting a louder and more cheerful tone of voice, ‘to begin with today’s experiments of the equipment?’

‘Give me an hour, Count,’ pleaded Kerensky. ‘Just one hour.’

To Kerensky’s surprise, the Count’s response was more reasonable than he would have thought possible from the man. ‘Just an hour, you say, Professor? Good. I’ll be back then.’

Giving Kerensky another of his enigmatic smiles, the Count turned away and made his way back up the stairs into the house.

Kerensky sighed as he heard the door at the top of the staircase close followed by the inevitable clunk of the key turning in the lock.

She stared at the wide green bracelet, fascinated that such a simple object could be considered so important.

She was tall, thin, with thick auburn hair and smoked a long cigarette in an expensive cigarette holder as she sat in the lounge of the château. Her clothes were clearly also very expensive, but then money was hardly a problem for this woman. Her husband had one of the largest credit card collections in all of Europe.

She was the Countess Scarlioni.

She loved this life. This was the life she had dreamed of living. Often she would reflect on where she would be had she not met the Count five years ago and discovered his secret life as a criminal. Her initial plan had been to expose him to the police, who were offering a substantial reward for information as to the whereabouts of the Monet painting he had stolen from the Orangerie, but when she realized that this was not his only theft it made more sense to blackmail him into marriage and share in the rewards of his labours. They both profited from such an arrangement - he had a vivacious and charming wife to help di-vert suspicion at every social event they attended when he would be casing the place out for his next illicit purchase. And she had access to riches beyond her imaginings. Eventually, she would have him killed and inherit his fortune, but for now she was content with things the way they were.

The luxurious and spacious lounge, like the Countess, had obviously also had a good deal of money spent on it. Next to the couch on which she was sitting were two immacu-late Louis Quinze chairs, and a table over by the large lounge window had four upturned glasses and a bottle of wine in an ice bucket all on a silver tray. An enormous vase stood next to the ornate fireplace, above which hung a large mirror, and paintings adorned all four walls. Various forms of art from different centuries that shouldn't have matched filled the room, but together they all signified one thing - wealth. And the rest of the château was just the same.

The Countess took another puff on her cigarette and then stubbed it out in an ashtray on the low table in front of her. She then picked up a small, ornately crafted box and deftly pressed it at certain points, creating a series of sharp clicking noises which released the box lid. Sliding it open, she placed the bracelet inside and closed the lid again.

The lounge doors opened, and the Count entered. A weaker human being might have started, but the Countess Scarlioni knew how to remain cool in the face of adversity. And while there was no love lost between them, their mutual love of money made their relationship a great deal easier. 'All set for your little trip to the Louvre?' the Count enquired as he wandered over to her.

'Of course.' She returned his sly, almost mocking smile.

'You won't forget the bracelet, I trust?' he continued. He picked the box up, as she had done before him, quickly sprang the lid and took the object from within it.

'No.' He clipped the bracelet around her wrist. His touch was cold. When his hand came away she looked up at her husband. 'What is it for?' she wanted to know.

Count Scarlioni chuckled mysteriously. ‘Let’s just say it will make us both richer than you can possibly imagine...’

The early morning drizzle had all but disappeared and the sun was showing signs of rear-ing its head. Duggan had been waiting an hour. The bitter coffee was cold in the polysty-rene cup he clutched in one hand, while his third cigarette was pressed firmly to his lips.

When he’d tried to light it he had tried to balance the half-empty cup in the crook of his arm in order to have both hands free, and he’d spilt coffee on his trenchcoat. He could already tell it would be one of those days that turned out to be too hot for the excess of clothes he’d put on back when it seemed wet and cold.

Half-past nine and there was already a queue leading up to the entrance of the Louvre.

13

The percentage of tourists was always so high that it was never difficult to spot a genuine Parisian amongst the crowds. By lunchtime, Duggan reflected, there would be security guards up here, setting out barriers to regulate the queue into a lengthy zigzag shape, whereas now it was just a single straight line backing away from the entrance.

He glanced down the road behind him at exactly the right moment. There it was in the distance, the black limousine. It came to a stop but the motor remained running. From the front passenger seat a tall, bearded man built like a fridge emerged, dressed in a black suit.

Duggan fumbled for his binoculars, dropping the cup of coffee onto the pavement. He un-furled the compact device and looked down the barrel, the butt of the cigarette burning his fingers as he tried to adjust the focus on the lens.

‘Yes,’ he whispered to himself. At last. The man, who was opening the back passenger side door, was definitely the Scarlionis’ bodyguard. And the woman the bodyguard was helping out of the car was the Countess Scarlioni, no doubt about that. A head scarf concealed her curly auburn hair and dark glasses obscured her cold eyes, but Duggan had seen her close-up enough times now to be certain it was her. The bodyguard was getting back into the car, which was unusual, Duggan thought. He hurriedly folded up the small binoculars and put them back into the deep pocket inside the trenchcoat as the limousine pulled away from the curb and came down the street towards and then past him.

He watched the car disappear down the road and then looked back to where the Countess had joined the queue. With her husband’s connections she should have been able to swan in and out whenever she liked, but Duggan had learnt by now that joining

the queue, like the head scarf and sunglasses, was all part of the attempt to look inconspicuous.

Already a group of tourists were standing behind her, and by the time he crossed the road and joined the queue himself Duggan knew there would be enough distance between them for her not to notice him. He dropped the cigarette butt and kicked the cup towards the gutter as he crossed the road, relieved that at last something was actually happening.

The Count Scarlioni stared at his reflection in the mirror.

There was something about the face that looked back at him. Something too perfect about the evenness and balance, about the smoothness of the skin and the unblemished complexion. The eyes were a piercing green and the white around the irises was perfect with no hint of tiredness or fatigue, no bloodshot lines or veins. Not a line on the forehead, not a hair out of place on the head. It was all too perfect somehow.

This room was supposed to be a study and was referred to as such by Hermann and by the servants. But only he was allowed in here. No one had ever dared break that rule. Not even his wife, who was unusually bold in most respects and more than prepared to stand against him or face him as an equal. If there was a problem with this union, he thought, it was that she didn't fear him nearly enough.

The room was dark, empty, silent. An armchair and the mirror were the only items of furniture and the light above the mirror the only source of illumination. It was in total con-trast to the rest of the house.

He stared at his reflection, unblinking. His breathing was so shallow that he could have passed for a statue or a waxwork. His physique was also unnaturally perfect for his age; as he stood before the mirror he looked absolutely relaxed and yet also in control of every tiny muscle in his body.

Out of the corner of his eye he noticed something. On his jawline, just below his left ear. He titled his head slightly so that the light caught it, leaning in towards the mirror to examine his face more closely.

Just below the ear was a crack, a blemish in the otherwise perfect skin. With a perfectly

manicured finger he touched the blemish, rubbed it slightly. The skin peeled back around the crack. He took a moment to look at his smooth, veinless hand and then reached back towards the peeling skin with his thumb and forefinger. He gave a careful pull and slowly a long strip of skin peeled back down towards his chin and effortlessly broke away from his face.

All was perfect again. He scrutinised the face for any further visible blemishes but there were none.

Soon. Too soon.

The Count Scarlioni stared at his reflection in the mirror.

Kerensky had been dozing. He was exhausted and had dropped off without even realizing it whilst poring over papers at his desk in the laboratory. It was the lack of fresh air that sapped his energy; no matter how often the Count made him go to bed early in the evening, so long as he was shut inside this house with no access to daylight, not even allowed to venture out into the château's courtyard, he would be continually exhausted.

It was the key turning in the lock at the top of the stairs that awoke him with a start. A wave of dread washed over him and he scurried towards the main power units, throwing the starter switches over so that the machinery began to whir and rumble as it warmed itself up. Kerensky looked around for his glasses, fumbled for his files, tried desperately to look like he'd been hard at work as his patron descended the stairs.

'Now, Professor,' said Count Scarlioni, 'shall we begin?'

15

2

Art and Lies

'Nice, isn't it?'

'Yes, marvellous.'

'Marvellous. Absolutely. Yes.'

'Yes, absolutely marvellous.'

'I don't know about you, but I think it's marvellous.'

'So do I.'

'Good. If you hadn't I'd have been very upset.'

‘Well then you haven’t got anything to worry about.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Positive.’

‘Oh.’

‘Yes.’

‘Good.’

‘It’s not quite how you described it, though.’

‘Oh, how did I describe it?’

‘You said it was nice,’ Romana frowned, with just the slightest hint of condescension.

The Doctor shrugged. By now, he was beginning to think, there was absolutely no satisfying Romana. From the middle observation deck of the Eiffel Tower, they could look over the whole of central Paris, and here she was splitting hairs over his choice of description. ‘Oh well,’ he sighed. ‘It’s still the only place in the galaxy where one can relax entirely.’

‘Oh, that bouquet!’ declared Romana, with an appreciative smile. Finally, at the end of the argument, she was beginning to give in to exactly the kind of pointless behaviour the Doctor had been arguing in favour of all along - simple, mundane, un-Gallifreyan things like sniffing the morning air in a beautiful city.

‘What Paris has,’ the Doctor said as he continued his philosophical assessment of the city, ‘is an ethos. A life. It has...’ He searched for the right word to end the sentence.

‘A bouquet.’

‘It has a spirit all of its own... it has...’

‘A bouquet?’

‘Like a wine, it has...’

‘A bouquet!’

‘...it has a bouquet! Like a good wine,’ mused the Doctor. ‘You have to choose an old vintage, of course.’

Romana frowned. ‘What year is this?’

‘What?’ The Doctor thought for a moment. ‘Ah, well it’s 1979, actually. More of a table wine, really.’

‘A good one?’

16

‘I don’t know,’ the Doctor confessed. ‘A randomiser’s a useful device, but it lacks true discrimination.’ He grinned a mischievous grin and adopted his loudest stage whisper.

‘Shall we sip it and see?’

Romana’s eyes lit up. ‘Let’s!’ She looked around them with a slightly confused frown.

‘Shall we take the lift or fly?’

‘Let’s not be ostentatious,’ the Doctor advised, with a cursory nod at the other tourists around them.

‘All right, let’s fly then.’

‘That would be silly,’ the Doctor said severely. ‘We’ll take the lift.’

They took the lift.

The argument, as the Doctor saw it, had been going on for four hundred years. Yesterday they’d been in London in the year 2000. As a treat, he’d decided to take Romana to see a work of great art. In the heat of the July afternoon they paid their £5 each at the box office and joined the other tourists making their way into the yard at the reconstructed Globe Theatre on the South Bank. ‘This,’ the Doctor told Romana, ‘is one of the greatest works of art to have been created. It’s certainly the greatest play ever written. And I should know. I had a hand in it.’ As usual, he was declaiming too loudly and Romana smiled politely at the audience members around them giving them strange looks. ‘And yet somehow I’ve never managed to see the whole thing through…the trouble with being a Time Lord is that there’s never enough time.’

‘Surely,’ contradicted Romana, ‘we have all the time in the world?’

The Doctor chuckled and the play began. ‘Brilliant,’ he whispered as Barnardo and Francisco fired lines of pentameter at each other. ‘You know, Will wanted to cut all this stuff out,’ he said as Horatio and Marcellus arrived. ‘He wanted to start it with the council scene. ‘But Will’, I told him, ‘you must have the Ghost appear right at the start. Otherwise the first half an hour is all talk!’ He was quite an easy pushover, that boy.’

When the Ghost appeared, rising up through a trap door in the centre of the stage, the Doctor grinned his wide-eyed grin and said, ‘Excellent. Excellent!’ Romana, on the other hand, thought it was silly and said so. ‘Silly?’ retorted the Doctor indignantly.

‘Yes,’ said Romana. ‘Anyone could tell that wasn’t a ghost. It’s just a man in a suit.’

‘But you have to suspend your disbelief!’ the Doctor insisted. ‘This is a great work of art! In great works of art, it’s not the effect but the intention that matters! They,’ he said, gesturing widely at the groundlings around them who were wishing he’d shut up, ‘know it’s just a man in a suit.’ There was a twinkle in his eyes. ‘But they believe it just the same!’

‘I’ve been to theatre before,’ said Romana condescendingly. ‘And when they needed ghosts, they used holographic projection and effects that made the audience believe they really were seeing a ghost. No one here is fooled. They’re being conned. Surely by now Earth is capable of better than this?’

‘Of course they are! But the whole point of this place is that they’re recreating great works of art as they once were - the point is in the story, in the poetry and the script! Not in the special effects! Four hundred years ago, close to this spot, human beings were held rapt by this play.’

There was a whisper from beside them. ‘And some of us are still trying to be! Will you please shut up?’ said an audience member. The Doctor and Romana glanced up to find that not only were the people around them glaring angrily but the Danish Court onstage were paused in mid-action waiting for the end of the distraction.

‘It’s all right,’ growled the Doctor, ‘we’re leaving,’ and he took Romana by the arm straight back to the TARDIS.

17

Things hadn’t gone much better in 1601. Amidst the Elizabethan audience the Doctor and Romana looked like giants and smelt like fanatics in the field of personal hygiene.

When the Ghost appeared, the Doctor said, ‘Look, it’s Will!’ in a bellowed whisper, and onstage the Ghost grimaced, before nodding in the Doctor’s direction through clenched teeth and then carrying on with the scene.

The audience may have been rapt as the Ghost descended into the trap door situated in the centre of the stage, but Romana was not. ‘This is even worse than the other one,’ she murmured. ‘How can any of them be taking this seriously?’

‘But listen to the poetry!’ the Doctor begged. ‘Listen to those lines!’ He spoke along with the onstage actor. ‘‘But look; the morn in russet mantle clad walks o’er the dew of yon high eastward hill’! Brilliant! Wait until they get to the bits I helped with!’

‘At least the Ghost in the other one had a better costume,’ snorted Romana.

‘How many times do I have to tell you? This is a work of great art. The costumes don’t matter!’ The Doctor was becoming more than exasperated. ‘This is one of the greatest lit-erary works in the universe and you complain about the costumes!’

‘The world, Doctor.’

‘What?’

‘The world,’ repeated Romana. ‘Not ‘the universe’ in public; people might hear you.’

‘I don’t care!’ exclaimed the angry Time Lord. ‘This is one of the greatest plays in the universe!’

‘How can you know?’ retorted Romana, through clenched teeth. ‘I thought you said you’d never seen it through to the end?’ And with that she pushed her way out of the packed yard and returned to the TARDIS, which had several horses tied to it. The last of them was puzzling over its new-found freedom when the Doctor stalked back into the TARDIS. ‘There’s no satisfying you,’ he complained. ‘The human race are capable of such great artistic achievements, and you won’t give them the slightest bit of acknowl-edgement…what a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties!’

‘Doctor, you have failed so far to show me anything that might imply that humans are as ingenious and industrious in the Arts as you continue to maintain they are,’ replied the adamant Romana.

And so they came to Paris. So far, she hadn’t complained.

They’d had to fight their way onto the train when they got to the Metro. The Parisians cheered them on. Unlike Londoners, Parisians respect rule-breakers and people who hold up trains from departing on time by standing in the way of closing doors. They received a polite round of applause as the Doctor freed his scarf from the train doors and proceeded to an empty seat.

‘Where are we going?’ Romana asked as the train pulled away from the Champ de Mars Tour Eiffel Metro station.

The Doctor raised an eyebrow at her. ‘Are you talking philosophically or geographically?’ he enquired.

Romana thought this over for a moment. ‘Philosophically,’ she decided.

The Doctor grinned. ‘Then we’re going to lunch!’ He settled back in his seat. ‘I know a little place not too far from here that does an excellent bouillabaisse.’

‘Bouillabaisse...’ Romana savoured the word, unaware that the imagined meal would turn out to be a simple fish soup. ‘Yum, yum!’ Humans might be lousy artists, but as far as Romana was concerned they knew how to cook.

A short while later, they disembarked at another station and made their way back up to ground level, whereupon the Doctor led the way past the Nôtre Dame cathedral to a small street-front café called La Vache, and ordered bouillabaisse and tea.

Romana sat at a table and looked around. The café had a number of small round tables with matching gingham tablecloths and three chairs. One side of the café was dominated by a long bar, presided over by the café patron, who spent his time watching a small television set when he wasn't serving customers. The Doctor greeted the patron with a cheery

'Hello, Jaques!' to which Jaques responded the kind of grunt that was peculiar to men of his profession.

The Doctor reached into his coat pocket and pulled out the book he had purchased at the Metro station, entitled 3 Million d'Annees d'Adventure Humaine. He hadn't the faintest idea what had possessed him to purchase it but it sounded thrilling. He opened it to the first page and flicked through the entire book in a couple of seconds..

'Any good?' Romana enquired casually.

'Not bad,' the Doctor replied, stowing it away again. 'A bit boring in the middle.'

Romana breathed in the aroma of the café and sighed. 'You're right, Doctor.'

'Am I? Good, I usually am. What about?' Surely she wasn't about to concede defeat in their eternal argument about Art?

'About Paris being so relaxing.'

The Doctor nodded. 'Yes, I suppose it is.'

'Have you been to Paris before?'

'Oh yes.' The Doctor frowned thoughtfully. 'This used to be my favourite place on Earth, back before the Renaissance. It's a while since I've been back here, though.'

'Really?'

'Hmmm. Dropped by to see the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre, and later on a bit of the French Revolution... even in the midst of chaos, this city has an atmosphere like no other.'

'How do you mean?' Romana sniffed the air, puzzled. 'Methane? Carbon? Molybdenum?'

The Doctor broke into a grin. Sometimes Romana wasn't as smart as she thought she was - or rather it was that she took things too literally. 'No,' he said with a harsh laugh,

'but it has a bouquet!'

Jaques called out to tell them that their bouillabaisse was ready. ‘I’ll get it,’ said Romana, and went to stand up.

‘No!’ hissed the Doctor urgently. ‘Don’t move, you might spoil a priceless work of art!’

Romana frowned. ‘What?’

The Doctor nodded slightly towards the table behind them. ‘That man over there... no, don’t look!’

‘What’s he doing?’ she asked, mortified.

A pause, before the Doctor spoke. ‘He’s sketching you!’

Romana’s fear gave way to delight. ‘Is he?’ She went to turn around.

‘No!’ whispered the Doctor, but Romana had already turned.

Across the café, a man wearing a tweed suit and a beret scowled at her, cursed silently and then screwed up the top page of his drawing pad. He then stormed out of the café, pausing only to theatrically toss the crumpled ball of paper into a bin as he passed their table.

The Doctor and Romana exchanged glum expressions.

‘I told you not to look,’ the Doctor murmured reprovingly.

Romana was indignant. ‘I just wanted to see!’

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Well it’s too late, he’s gone now.’

‘Pity.’ Romana leaned back in her chair. ‘I wonder what he thought I looked like?’

‘Well, he threw it down over there,’ said the Doctor, and retrieved the crumpled sheet

of paper from the bin. Jaques cleared his throat as two bowls of bouillabaisse steamed away on the counter. The Doctor carefully uncrumpled the paper. ‘Let’s have a look, shall we...’

He suddenly stopped. There was a tingling in his head and he looked carefully at Romana. She could feel it too. A strange sensation came over them and they both found their attention drawn back to the patron up at the counter.

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‘Pity.’ Romana leaned back in her chair. ‘I wonder what he thought I looked like?’

‘Well,’ said the Doctor, ‘he threw it down over there.’ But there was no need to cross over to the bin, for the sheet of paper was already in his hand, as it had been when the tingling feeling had begun. The sensation was gone now. He looked around the café carefully. All was normal and there was nothing in the behaviour of the other customers to suggest that it had ever been otherwise.

Romana stared at the Doctor with an expression of bewilderment. ‘What’s going on?’

she asked.

The Doctor was, for once, as equally puzzled as his companion. ‘I don’t know,’ he admitted, a twinge of pain nagging at his ego. ‘It’s as if... as if time jumped a track for a second!’ He held up the sheet of paper and frowned, as if expecting it to somehow be the cause of the mysterious temporal disturbance..

‘Let’s have a look,’ suggested Romana.

The Doctor smoothed the paper out on the table, and then held it up to examine it. His face paled and he put the picture face-down on the table. ‘You know, for a Time Lady,’ he said quietly, ‘that’s not at all a bad likeness...’

‘Let me see.’ Romana reached out and turned the sheet so that she could see it. She drew a sharp intake of breath as she saw what the Doctor meant. The picture was a head and shoulders sketch of her - but in place of her facial features was a clock-face with Roman numerals and a jagged crack running across it.

‘It’s extraordinary!’ Romana exclaimed.

‘It is, isn’t it?’ the Doctor agreed.

‘I wonder why he did it like that...?’ she mused.

‘Like what?’

‘The face of the clock - it’s fractured.’

The Doctor grinned. ‘Hmmm, almost like a crack in time,’ he punned, and then stopped himself when he realised the gravity of what he’d just said. ‘A crack in time...!’

The machine in the château’s cellar laboratory was now dormant.

‘Time, Count!’ spluttered Kerensky as he shut down the last of the power systems, scurrying to avoid the Count’s glare of disapproval at yet another failure. ‘It will take time!’

Count Scarlioni nodded, disappointed. ‘Time,’ he murmured, liking the sound of the word. ‘Time, time...’ He straightened up and turned to the Professor. ‘Nevertheless,’ he said confidently, ‘a very impressive, if... flawed demonstration. I’m relying on you to make very fast progress now, Professor. The fate of many people is in our hands!’

Professor Kerensky nodded. ‘The world will have much to thank you for,’ he said with admiration. Just occasionally he remembered the actual purpose of their work and realised what a great thing it was the Count hoped to accomplish.

‘It will indeed, Professor,’ murmured Scarlioni with his cat-like smile, ‘it will indeed...’

Hermann came down the stairs and the Count drew him aside. ‘Have you sold that Gutenberg?’ he enquired.

‘Yes, Excellency,’ Hermann confirmed.

‘That was well done,’ the Count remarked. ‘How much did you get for it?’

‘One hundred and fifty thousand.’

The Count winced. ‘Not nearly enough...’

‘The buyer was almost convinced it was a fake.’

The Count chuckled. ‘Did you convince him otherwise?’

‘Of course, Excellency.’

‘Good. Has the Countess gone to the Louvre?’

‘She left but an hour ago,’ came the reply.

Scarlioni nodded, and dismissed Hermann before turning back to the Professor. ‘How soon before we can start the next test?’

Kerensky sighed. ‘The next one, Count?’ he groaned.

‘I want to see it today,’ the Count told him.

Kerensky gaped. ‘Today?’

‘Yes! Today!’

Professor Kerensky shook his head. ‘I think this is wonderful work, Count Scarlioni, but I do not understand this obsessive urgency!’ he complained.

‘Time, Professor!’ Scarlioni glared, mockingly. ‘It is all a matter of time!’

Their bouillabaisse forgotten, the Doctor and Romana had gone outside and seated themselves at a table in the concourse. A large umbrella mounted in the middle of the table shaded them from the early afternoon sun.

‘I think there’s something the matter with time,’ the Doctor said at last. ‘Do you feel anything?’

Romana considered. ‘Yes, just a twinge,’ she admitted, ‘and I don’t like it.’

The Doctor stared off into the distance, frowning thoughtfully. ‘It must be because I’ve crossed the time fields so often,’ he said indecisively. ‘No one on Earth seemed to notice anything.’ With a gleam in his wide blue eyes, he took hold of Romana’s hand. ‘We are unique. You and I exist in a special relationship with Time, you know.’ He breathed a sigh of amazement and smiled. ‘Perpetual outsiders...’

Romana sneered and pulled her hand away. ‘Oh, don’t be so... so portentous!’ she snapped.

21

‘Portentous?’ said the Doctor incredulously. ‘Portentous?’ He pulled the sketch from inside his coat and slapped it down on the table. He could sense the old argument flaring up again. ‘Well what do you make of this, then?’ he demanded.

Romana wrinkled her nose. ‘Well, at least on Gallifrey we can capture a good likeness.

Computers can draw, you know.’

‘What?’ The Doctor’s mouth fell open. ‘Computer pictures?’ He couldn’t believe Romana’s nerve. ‘You sit here - in Paris - and talk about computer pictures?’ He got to his feet. ‘I’ll take you somewhere and show you some real pictures,’ he snarled, infuriated,

‘drawn by real people!’

‘But what about the time-slip?’ Romana called as the Doctor set out in an angry pace across the concourse.

‘Never mind about the time-slip!’ he bellowed back. ‘We’re on holiday!’

Romana sighed. It took so little these days to set him off - one casual word in the wrong place and he seemed to fly right of the handle. One regeneration, it’s all going to catch up with him, she thought, and hoped she wouldn’t be there to see it. She got to her feet and ran after him, leaving the forgotten sketch on the table.

As they passed the Conciergerie, the Doctor did a brief double-take, remembering that the ancient building had played a big part in one of his previous Parisian excursions. But apart from that one moment, this was the worst the argument had ever been. ‘You know nothing about Art,’ the Doctor scolded her, ‘absolutely nothing. You might have achieved a Triple Alpha pass once, but at heart you’re just like all those other cultureless Patrexes.

Number-crunchers, that’s all they are!’

‘I am not a number-cruncher!’ protested Romana as they strode down the south side of the Seine. ‘I worked in the Bureau of Ancient Records! We dealt with all forms of history and Art!’

‘Gallifreyan history!’ the Doctor snapped. ‘Gallifreyan art! You know nothing of the real universe! There are more things in heaven and earth…’

‘Oh, don’t start quoting that wretched play again,’ begged Romana. She stopped dead in her tracks, looking back down the Seine. ‘Do you even know where you’re going?’

The Doctor stopped, startled, and glanced around. After a three hundred and sixty degree turn, he peered over the river. ‘Of course I do,’ he snapped, and headed straight towards the nearest bridge. Once they were on the right side of the river the Doctor marched with determination up the steps past the Orangerie and into the Jardin des Tuleries. With the onset of Spring the trees were beginning to flower. Gravel crunched underfoot as the Doctor strode in a straight line, finally stopping at the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel.

‘There we are,’ he declared grandly, indicating the huge museum ahead of them, ‘the Louvre! One of the greatest art galleries in the Universe.’

‘Nonsense,’ Romana retorted as they approached the entrance. ‘What about the Academius Stolarus Art Gallery on Sirius Five?’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘No, no, no.’

‘What about the Braxiatel Collection?’ she asked as they waited in the queue.

The Doctor shook his head again. ‘A pile of childrens’ pictures, drawn in a nursery,’ he declared.

‘Or the Solarium Panatica on Stricium?’ continued Romana as they finally purchased their tickets.

The Doctor was still shaking his head. ‘The nursery that produced the Braxiatel Collection.’

‘But surely then there’s the…’

‘No! There’s nothing else! ...this is the gallery,’ the Doctor insisted, dragging her 22

through the building at a breakneck pace, ignoring the medieval fortress and the Egyptian section, ‘the only gallery in the known Universe to contain a picture like...’

Up stairs, around corners, down stairs, past tourists, he led her towards a painting that hung in its own space behind a protective glass cover.

‘...the Mona Lisa,’ the Doctor announced solemnly.

There was a long silence whilst Romana stared long and hard at the painting. That was it. That was the Doctor’s grand finale. If she wasn’t going to respond to Will’s plays, if the Italian museums were not going to sway her, then this was the only thing that might.

‘Quite good,’ said Romana at last.

‘Quite good?’ echoed the Doctor. His voice rose and his face began to turn red. ‘Quite good? That’s one of the great treasures of the Universe and you say quite good? Quite good!’

‘The world, Doctor!’ Romana corrected.

‘What?’

‘Not ‘the Universe’ in public! People might hear you!’ she cautioned.

‘I don’t care!’ exclaimed the Doctor, glaring around at the painting’s other onlookers to prove his point. ‘This is one of the great treasures of the Universe!’

‘Doctor,’ Romana muttered under her breath, ‘people are looking at you.’

‘I don’t care!’ he declared loudly. ‘Let them gawk. Let them gape. See if I care!’

People were indeed gawking and gaping. Amongst them was the Countess Scarlioni, seated at the end of a row of red leather chairs at one end of the room. She watched the conspicuous pair with curiosity. At the far wall behind her Duggan watched the Countess with curiosity. Not far away, two burly men in double-breasted suits and low-browed hats watched Duggan with curiosity. Romana, anxious to quell the Doctor making a scene, had turned her curiosity back towards the Mona Lisa.

‘Why hasn’t she got any eyebrows?’ she enquired.

Now it was the Doctor’s turn to gawk and gape. ‘What? Is that all you can say? No eyebrows?’ He shook his head in disbelief. ‘Romana, that’s the Mona Lisa you’re talking about!’ The Doctor suddenly frowned, peering at the painting. ‘You’re right,’ he said, astonished, ‘she hasn’t got any eyebrows! How did I never notice that?’ He thought back to a birthday party, centuries ago, and an angry model in Leonardo’s studio wanting the painter to get on with the job.

A small middle-aged woman led a group of Japanese tourists into the room. ‘...And over here, ladies and gentlemen,’ she was saying, ‘we have perhaps the most famous picture in the world: the Mona Lisa, painted by Leonardo da Vinci in 1503. It is believed to be a still-life portrait of the third wife of Francesco di Bartolemmeo di Giocondo, an Italian aristocrat who…’

She stopped and pursed her lips. A tall man with curly hair wearing a coat and a ridiculously long scarf was blocking the view of the painting. She cleared her throat loudly and tapped him firmly on the shoulder. ‘Excuse me, Monsieur,’ she said, and moved around to face him, just as he turned in the opposite direction to see who had tapped him. She returned to her original position as he turned the other way again. Eventually they managed to find each other. ‘Excuse me, Monsieur,’ the guide repeated.

The Doctor smiled innocently. ‘Yes?’

‘Could you please move along?’ she requested as calmly as she could. Jobs of this calibre were not for the easily unnerved. ‘Other people wish to enjoy this picture.’

‘Of course!’ The Doctor obligingly stepped aside and produced a small paper bag.

‘Would anyone like a jelly baby?’ The tourists all ‘ahhh!’ed, ignoring the painting in favour of the proffered bag.

23

Romana frowned. ‘What did she say?’ she whispered in the Doctor’s ear.

The Doctor turned to her. ‘She said...’

And then it happened again. The tingling in his head.

‘...And over here, ladies and gentlemen,’ the guide said, ‘we have perhaps the most famous picture in the world: the Mona Lisa, painted by Leonardo da Vinci in 1503. It is believed to be a still-life portrait of the third wife of Francesco di Bartolemmeo di Giocondo, an Italian aristocrat who…’

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Romana frowned. ‘What did she say?’ she whispered in the Doctor’s ear.

The Doctor turned to face Romana and the look on her face confirmed that again, he wasn’t the only person who’d felt the unusual sensation. He frowned as something caught his eye, and then he gave a loud groan and clutched his head. He swayed, tripped over his scarf, lost his balance and toppled forward. The row of seats broke his

fall and he landed face-up in the Countess' lap. People stopped looking at priceless works of art and instead gathered around to see what was wrong.

Duggan pushed through the small crowd, cursing the circumstances that had led to having to blow his cover. He did his best to look authoritative as he approached the Doctor.

'All right, stand back everybody,' he instructed, adopting the manner he had once used as a police officer.

While the Countess sat by, not the slightest bit worried or embarrassed, Duggan attempted to help the Doctor to his feet. This resulted in the Doctor sprawling and hitting Duggan in the stomach with his head. Then he fell backwards and lay dazed on the floor.

'Are you all right, sir?' Duggan asked.

The Doctor opened his eyes and looked up. 'Yes,' he said unnecessarily loudly, 'yes, I'm all right. I just dented my head on your gun, that's all…'

This provoked murmurs of concern from the already rather surprised onlookers.

Duggan groaned inwardly, but managed a laugh for appearances. 'My what?' he chuckled, trying unsuccessfully to feign innocence.

'Your gun,' continued the Doctor at full volume, sitting up, 'it's just in here inside your coat.' He reached into Duggan's grey trenchcoat and tried to take out the object in order to demonstrate to the baffled crowd what had happened. Duggan shook off the Doctor's hand and stepped back hurriedly.

By now Romana had fought her way through the crowd and reached the Doctor. She helped him to his feet and smiled at Duggan. 'Don't take any notice of him,' she assured the exasperated detective. 'He's just having one of his funny turns.'

'My funny turns?' The Doctor swayed slightly as he leaned on Romana for support.

'The whole world took a funny turn!'

'Come on, Doctor!' said Romana firmly, gripping his arm and leading him away 24

through the dissipating crowd, hoping she could find an exit quickly.

But Duggan wasn't fooled. He hesitated for a few seconds, and then began to follow them out of the Louvre. The Countess looked over and nodded at her two men, and they responded by moving off after Duggan. The guide vowed that this was the final straw.

This time she was definitely handing in her resignation.

The Japanese tourists were enjoying their jelly babies.

25

3

In Equal Scale Weighing Delight and Dole

‘Excellent, Professor!’ exclaimed the Count as the last of the equipment gauges fell back down to zero. Moments earlier the laboratory had been a roaring hive of computer activity and now it returned to normal as Kerensky shut down the machinery. ‘Excellent!’

The Professor was far from satisfied. ‘An unfortunate side-effect,’ he complained.

‘Not at all!’ the Count beamed. ‘Not at all. The work progresses well. And now,’ he continued, ‘I want you to find a way of vastly increasing the time span.’

Kerensky looked on in disbelief. ‘I’m not sure that I can, Count! You see, Einstein says that…’

‘I’m not paying Einstein,’ the Count cut in, his previous pleasure turning rapidly to coldness, ‘I’m paying you. Now continue with your work!’

Kerensky groaned his usual pathetic groan and shook his head in frustration, looking as if he were about to break down in tears. ‘You are stretching me to the limit, Count!’

Scarlioni smiled thinly. ‘Only thus is true progress ever made. You, as a scientist, should be the first to appreciate that.’

‘Ah, I do, Count,’ Kerensky assured him wearily, ‘I do!’ He stretched his arms out in front of him in an imploring gesture, determined not to fall for the Count’s usual disarming tactics. The man was so good at making you believe everything was for your own good. ‘I appreciate many things! I appreciate walks in the country, sleep, regular meals...’

Count Scarlioni nodded in understanding. ‘Hermann!’ he called.

The butler appeared almost instantly and hurried down the stairs into the laboratory.

‘Yes, Excellency?’

‘Would you please prepare for the Professor half a dozen escargots aux beurres, followed by a course of entrecôte beaudelaise, with haricots verts and pommes sautées, served directly here to the laboratory,’ he ordered, looking Kerensky in the eye with a satisfied smile as he spoke.

Hermann nodded. ‘Yes, sir.’

‘Oh, yes,’ continued the Count, ‘and a bottle of our best Champagne... no, you’d better make that half a bottle. We don’t want to interfere with the work.’

Kerensky was torn. The thought of a decent meal made him want to burst into tears but fatigue robbed him of any appetite. ‘Count Scarlioni,’ he began, making a final attempt to reason with his employer, ‘please, I would really like to get some sleep...’

Scarlioni turned as Hermann mounted the stairs. ‘Hermann, cancel the wine,’ he called,

‘and bring the vitamin pills...’

Kerensky’s face fell. He was quite certain he would never leave the château alive.

‘Well,’ said the Doctor, ‘here we are again.’

They had come full circle, and were once again seated at the table outside Café La Vache.

26

‘Doctor, I suppose you realise we were being followed?’ Romana informed him.

The Doctor nodded, resisting the urge to give Duggan, who was loitering in the background, a friendly wave. ‘All the way from the Louvre, by that idiot with the gun.’

‘Oh, you had noticed.’

‘I noticed twenty minutes ago.’

‘He wouldn’t make a very good detective.’

‘You’re right.’

‘What do you suppose he wants?’

‘Look in your pocket.’.

Romana felt in her blazer pocket. It was empty.

‘The other one,’ said the Doctor sharply.

She removed a large green bracelet and stared at it in surprise.

‘The woman I bumped into was wearing it,’ the Doctor explained.

Romana thinned her lips. ‘You stole it?’ she asked disapprovingly.

‘Of course not!’ objected the Doctor. ‘I just... borrowed it for a while.’

‘That’s what you said about the TARDIS,’ she reminded him. ‘What do you want with a bracelet? It’ll never go with that shirt.’

The Doctor scowled. ‘Look at it!’

Romana turned it over in her hands, examining the delicate designs running over it carefully. ‘It looks like a micro-meson scanner!’ she frowned.

‘That’s right. She was using it to get a complete report on all the alarm and security systems around the Mona Lisa.’

‘Do you think she’s trying to steal it?’

The Doctor gave her a glum look. ‘It is a very pretty picture.’

Romana held up the bracelet. ‘This,’ she said, pointing at it with her free hand, ‘is an extremely sophisticated device for a Level Five civilisation.’

‘That?’ The Doctor shook his head disdainfully. ‘That’s never the product of Earth society!’

Romana gaped. ‘Do you mean an alien is trying to steal the Mona Lisa?’

The Doctor shrugged. ‘It is a very pretty picture…Romana, you know, I think there’s something very funny going on here. You remember that man who was following us?’

‘Yes?’

‘Well, he’s standing right behind me, poking a gun in my back!’

‘And then?’ Count Scarlioni asked his wife.

The Countess paced up and down the lounge of the château, watched by the Count from the sofa. ‘Well, then I had that stupid detective followed,’ she continued.

The Count raised an eyebrow. ‘Why?’

She directly avoided a proper answer. ‘Reasons.’

Scarlioni smiled; only slightly. ‘Oh please,’ he said mildly, ‘don’t play games.’

She sneered bitterly. ‘What else have I been doing these past few years?’

Scarlioni looked up at her and frowned. ‘Following instructions.’

‘Well, this detective, Duggan. He started to annoy me. He stopped watching the painting and started watching me.’

Scarlioni chuckled. ‘Shown a glimmer of intelligence at last,’ he mused. ‘Perhaps we should... deal with him? No, there’s no need for that. He’s too stupid to threaten our work seriously.’

‘Only then,’ the Countess went on, ‘something else happened in front of the painting.

This man I’d never seen before... well, he fainted.’

27

Her husband burst into laughter. ‘You are getting jumpy! He was probably overcome by your irresistible charm!’

The Countess closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Now here was the hard part. ‘It’s just that... as he fell, he somehow managed to get the bracelet off my wrist.’

For a moment the Count was silent. He was aware that she had been building up to a confession, but he hadn’t expected this. ‘What?’ he bellowed. ‘And you let him?’

‘I had no choice!’ she protested. ‘It was rushed and confused - and well organised, I’m sure of that.’

Scarlioni’s face had turned crimson with anger. ‘If anything happens to that bracelet...’

‘We’ll get it back!’ she assured him. ‘The matter is in hand even now.’

The Count got to his feet, seething. He knew how resourceful his wife could be when necessary, and that she was more than capable of solving her own problems. He put a

hand up to his forehead. The Countess thought he was mopping his brow but he was itching at a crack in the skin below his hairline. Rubbing it just made the thin layer of skin peel further back. ‘I trust you will be...’

‘Discreet?’ the Countess cut him short. ‘Of course.’

The gun pressed against the Doctor’s head looked fairly discreet, or at least as discreet as a gun could possibly be.

The Doctor and Romana had persuaded Duggan to put away his gun and to go inside the café with them and discuss things in a reasonable manner. They had barely sat down at a table when the Doctor found himself threatened with a gun for the second time in almost as many minutes. This time it was Scarlioni’s two dark-suited thugs.

For a moment, the Doctor was silent. Then he looked up at the man with a frown. He smiled, then dared to ask, ‘What bracelet?’ as innocently as he could.

The man flicked back the safety catch on the revolver.

The Doctor’s smile turned into a sour frown. ‘Oh,’ he murmured, ‘that bracelet.’

Romana took the bracelet from inside her blazer and passed it to the Doctor, who clipped it on to the end of the gun pointed at him. The thug pocketed the bracelet, and then the pair backed away out of the café.

‘Patron!’ the Doctor called as soon as they had gone. ‘Get me three glasses of water -

and make them doubles.’

‘All right,’ said Duggan at last, ‘that’s enough. Very cleverly staged, but you don’t fool me.’ He took a glance back at the doorway. The thugs were nowhere in sight.

The Doctor looked Duggan in the eye. ‘What are you talking about?’

Duggan was nearing aggravation. ‘Your men who were in here just now!’

‘My men - those thugs?’

‘Your thugs!’

‘My thugs?’

‘Yes!’

There was a momentary silence, and then the Doctor said, ‘Are you suggesting those men were in my employ?’

‘Yes!’

Another momentary silence.

‘I don’t know whether or not you noticed,’ the Doctor told Duggan in lowered tones,

‘but he was pointing a gun at me. Anyone in my employ who behaved like that would be sacked on the spot.’

Duggan nodded. ‘Except that I know you arranged for those men to hold you up as a bluff!’

28

‘What?’

‘You’re trying to put me on a false scent!’

The Doctor opened his mouth to deny the accusation, when something else occurred to him, and he pointed a finger at the detective. ‘You’re English, aren’t you?’

‘So?’

‘So, I just thought that was very interesting.’ The Doctor turned and called out to Jaques behind the bar. ‘Patron, I thought I ordered three glasses of water?’

Jaques sighed and brought over a tray of three glasses of water, grumbling under his breath in the assumption that none of them were fluent enough in French to understand him

Duggan was becoming even more impatient. ‘Listen...’

‘‘Doctor’,’ the Time Lord supplied helpfully.

‘What’s Scarlioni’s angle?’

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Scarlioni’s angle? Never heard of it.’ He turned to Romana.

‘Have you ever heard of Scarlioni’s angle?’

Romana shook her head. ‘No, I was never any good at geometry. Why don’t you ask a number-cruncher?’

The Doctor ignored the jibe and looked back at Duggan. ‘Who’s Scarlioni?’

‘Count Scarlioni!’ Duggan sighed. ‘Don’t play the innocent with me. Everyone on Earth’s heard of Count Scarlioni!’

The Doctor’s eyes lit up. ‘Ah, well that’s it! We’ve only just arrived on Earth,’ he explained.

‘Right, that’s it,’ snapped Duggan. ‘I give up,’ he called as he made for the café door,

‘you’re both mad.’

He opened the door, and was about to go through it when the Doctor called after him,

‘Mad enough to want to steal the Mona Lisa?’

Duggan stopped. Slowly, he turned to face the Doctor and against his better judgement found himself walking back to the table and sitting down. ‘Or at least,’ the Doctor continued quietly, ‘be interested in someone mad enough to want to steal the Mona Lisa?’

Duggan slumped back into his chair, and took a long swig from his glass of water. The liquid wasn’t nearly strong enough for the morning he’d had. He reached over to the table opposite, took a glass of red wine that sat on the peripheral of a young couple’s intense conversation, and knocked it back in a single gulp before they’d had time to register what was happening. After a shudder - he hated red wine - and a deep breath, he looked up at the two grinning Time Lords in front of him.

‘All right,’ he said at last, ‘what do you know?’

Scarlioni took the bracelet that was being held out before him and examined it carefully for any sign of damage. Satisfied, he looked up at the two henchmen. ‘Good,’ he said at last. ‘Thank you. You may go.’ He, the Countess and Hermann watched as the men left the lounge.

‘But not good enough,’ he said as soon as the lounge doors had closed. He nodded to Hermann. ‘Kill them.’

Hermann arched his eyebrows in surprise. ‘The detective and his friends, Excellency?’

‘No, Hermann,’ scowled the Count, ‘those two fools!’

Hermann smiled gleefully in anticipation. It had been at least three weeks since the Count had last allowed him to kill anyone. ‘With pleasure, Excellency!’ He bowed and left the room.

‘So,’ murmured the Count, turning to the Countess as his hands played idly with the 29

bracelet. ‘One was interested in you and the painting, and the other in this bracelet...’

‘Yes.’

Scarlioni put the bracelet down and looked up at her. ‘I should like to meet these people,’ he said.

‘Of course.’ The Countess indicated the doors. ‘Just tell Hermann.’

The Count went to stand, but as he did so, two gunshots rang out from the next room.

He turned back to the Countess and resisted a smile. ‘No, my dear,’ he said, ‘you tell Hermann.’

They both chuckled, realising that it was a little too late.

‘I think,’ mused the Count, ‘that we will need to hire those new men after all.’ His wife was still smiling as he kissed her lightly on the cheek and headed for the doors. It was little moments like these that made this marriage successful. ‘I wonder how soon they can start?’

The Countess frowned as she noticed how red her husband’s complexion had become.

Patches of skin on his forehead and jawline seemed to be peeling, as though he had been badly sunburnt, which hardly seemed likely with the weather they’d been having recently.

The Count had skin problems often - once every month or so it would flare up like an in-fection, and then suddenly be fine again. They seemed to have an unspoken agreement never to discuss the matter.

Even so, it still made her shudder.

‘So,’ said Duggan as he came to the end of his story, ‘you can imagine the furore.’ He had managed to maintain his cool though the discussion no matter how many times the Doctor or Romana had interrupted him with an inane comment or peculiar observation. Despite their eccentricity the pair did seem intensely interested in what he was telling them. After so long of little contact with English speakers, after days of talking to himself and running all the facts through his head, Duggan found it a relief to be able to discuss the matter out loud.

‘The what?’ Romana cut in.

‘Furore - the whole of the art world in a uproar.’ Duggan sat back in his chair.

‘Masterpieces that apparently have been missing for centuries are turning up all over the place!’

The Doctor nodded. ‘All fakes, of course?’

‘If so, then they’re very, very good ones. They stand up to every scientific test.’

The Doctor looked perplexed. ‘Really? And the only connection in all this is the Count?’

‘Yes,’ nodded Duggan, ‘but nothing dirty can be proved. He’s clean, absolutely clean.

So clean,’ he said bitterly, ‘he stinks.’

The Doctor disagreed. ‘He isn’t clean anymore. The Countess has the bracelet.’

Duggan paused. ‘How much is that bracelet worth?’

‘Well, that really depends on what you want to do with it... oh, hello!’

Romana and Duggan both leaned closer. ‘What?’ they asked intently.

The Doctor pointed behind them. ‘I think we’re being invited to leave!’

Romana and Duggan turned to see three men dressed in black suits and hats, each pointing a gun at them. They looked indistinguishable from the men who had reclaimed the bracelet from them. The Doctor glanced over to the bar to give Jaques an apologetic look.

The patron shrugged as though he were more than used to several armed hold-ups a day in his little café.

‘I say,’ said the Doctor to the thug nearest him, ‘I like your hat.’

30

The man’s reply was not as cheerful; if anything it was quite the opposite.

The native French speakers in the café were appalled.

‘You rang, Madam?’ enquired Hermann as he entered the lounge.

The Countess looked up. ‘‘Where is the Count?’ she asked.

‘I believe he is in the laboratory, my lady,’ Hermann replied.

She grimaced. ‘With that idiot Professor again, no doubt.’

Hermann shook his head. ‘No, my lady. Professor Kerensky has retired to his bed.’

The Countess gave a look of genuine surprise. ‘Oh. Thank you, Hermann.’

She left the lounge and went to the cellar door. It was locked.

‘Carlos?’ she called, pulling on the handle. ‘Carlos!’

No reply.

The Count was not in the laboratory. He was in his study. But the Countess’s calls still reached him, and he smiled. He was staring, unblinking, into the mirror. All over

his face the skin was blistering and peeling. He watched calmly as the skin around his mouth began to twitch, his forehead slowly bulging...

The Countess gave the door one last tug, then gave up and returned to the lounge.

His senses heightened, he heard her go. He might have smiled, but he no longer had any discernible mouth with which to effect this. The only part of his face that looked even vaguely human was the one lidless eye in the centre of a green scaled head.

It was the face of a Jagaroth...

31

4

There's No Art to Find the Mind's Construction in the Face Professor Kerensky was having a nightmare.

It was the same dream, the one in which Count Scarlioni lost his temper and did terrible things. On so many occasions Kerensky had seen him angered but the Count always managed to calm down again, to take a deep breath and smile that off-putting, disarming smile.

But in these dreams the Count roared, he bellowed, his green eyes seemed to burn through Kerensky as he cowered. 'You will now see how I deal with fools!' the monster that had been the Count said.

Suddenly he was awake, gasping for breath. He reached a hand out towards the bed-stand, searching for his glasses. His clumsy hand knocked them to the ground and he sighed wearily.

He had slept terribly ever since his arrival at the château. At first it was just the anxiousness with which he approached the task Scarlioni had employed him to undertake that kept him awake at night. But now, weeks in, the pressure under which he felt placed and the combination of a lack of food and too many stimulants to keep him working around the clock meant that every minute of sleep was fitful.

He could not see the clock but he knew that it was still light outside from the bright glare behind the drawn curtains. As usual there was the sound of activity throughout the house. There was no point in getting up. When the Count wanted him again, he would surely be sent for.

He closed his eyes and hoped the nightmare would not come again.

The Countess stood at the lounge window looking down on the courtyard below, watching as the new men, hired swiftly to replace the ones Hermann had killed, herded the Doctor, Romana and Duggan towards the house.

She smiled and went back to the couch, lighting herself an unhealthily long cigarette.

The doors opened and Hermann strode in. 'Excuse me, my lady,' he said, 'but the people you wish to speak to are here.'

It was sometimes hard for her to hide her contempt for Hermann, especially when he had a habit of relaying information she already knew. Often she wanted to snap at him, to scorn his ignorance, but if she ever wanted to effect her plan of making away with her husband, Hermann would be a more worthy ally than an enemy. 'Thank you, Hermann,' she answered. 'Show them in.'

As Hermann bowed and exited, the Countess noticed the bracelet sitting on the table in front of her, and mindful of not wanting to lose it again, placed it back inside the elaborate carved wooden box. Just as she finished locking it shut, the Doctor was shown in at gunpoint by Hermann. Duggan and Romana followed close behind. The Doctor, hands raised, gave the Countess a smile; then Hermann gave him an unexpected shove. The Doctor spun, stumbled and then tripped over his scarf. He crashed to the ground and disappeared 32

from sight.

A moment later his head appeared over the top of one of the Louis Quinze chairs.

'I say,' the Doctor exclaimed, 'what a wonderful butler - he's so violent!'

He crawled on his knees over to where the Countess now stood. 'Hello, I'm called the Doctor…' he pointed, 'that's Romana,' he pointed again, 'that's Duggan,' he pointed at her, 'you must be the Countess Scarlioni,' and then he pointed at the chair from behind which he had emerged, 'and this is clearly a delightful Louis Quinze chair, may I sit in it...?'

Without waiting for a reply, he leapt to his feet, spun and fell into the chair with such precision that it would have fallen apart otherwise. 'I say,' he said to no one in particular,

'haven't they worn well?'

He turned and called, ‘Thank you, Hermann, that will be all.’

Hermann ignored him and remained where he was.

‘Doctor,’ purred the Countess, as she crossed the room to the fireplace, ‘you’re being very pleasant with me.’

The Doctor grinned, almost modestly. ‘Yes, well I’m a very pleasant fellow!’

The Countess took another puff on her cigarette, and her tone hardened. ‘However,’ she continued, ‘I did not invite you here for social reasons.’

The Doctor nodded gravely. ‘Yes, I could see that the moment you didn’t ask me to have a drink... well, I will have a drink now that you come to mention it!’ He sprang to his feet and hurried over to the drinks table where he poured himself a glass of cognac from the crystal decanter.

‘Do come in, everybody!’ he called. ‘Romana, you can sit down over there…’ He indicated the couch and Romana sat on it. ‘...And Duggan, now Duggan, you sit there!’ He pointed at the other Louis Quinze chair. Duggan sighed exasperatedly but sat anyway.

The Doctor winked at the Countess. ‘Do sit down if you want to, Countess. No? All right.’

He looked around. ‘Duggan, would you like a drink?’

Duggan shook his head and grunted something unpleasant that could only have been a

‘no’.

‘Oh well,’ the Doctor shrugged. ‘Romana?’

She shook her head. ‘No thank you, Doctor,’ she replied politely.

‘Suit yourselves, then.’ The Doctor returned to his chair, glass in hand. ‘There,’ he said, raising the glass in a toast before taking a sip, ‘now isn’t this nice?’ He sat down waiting for a reply but none came.

The Countess waited until she was sure her guest had nothing left to say, glaring at him intently all the while. ‘The only reason you were brought here was to explain exactly why you stole my bracelet,’ she reminded him coldly.

The Doctor’s response left little doubt in her mind that his answer had been well thought-out.

‘Ah, well that’s my job, you see,’ he said with another of his engaging grins. ‘I’m a thief…’ He began the whole infuriating pointing procedure again, ‘…that’s Romana, she’s my accomplice...’ His voice rose, as an indication to the others to play along with his bluff.

‘And this is Duggan. He’s the detective who’s been kind enough to catch me, you see, that’s his job. Our two lines of work fit together beautifully...’

The Countess interrupted him with a sigh. ‘I was rather under the impression that Mister Duggan was following me.’

Another pre-planned answer. ‘Yes, well you’re a beautiful woman, probably, and Duggan was probably trying to summon up the courage to ask you out to dinner...’

Doctor winked at Romana and Duggan. ‘...weren’t you, Duggan?’

Duggan grimaced, and rolled his eyes at the ceiling.

The Countess was becoming annoyed. Deciding to abandon the informal approach, she turned from the fireplace and snapped, ‘Who sent you?’

‘Who sent me what?’ exclaimed the Doctor, doing his best to look bewildered.

‘Who sent you here!’

‘Nobody sent me here. Your men made me come!’

‘Who sent you to Paris?’

‘Oh, Paris! Why didn’t you say Paris in the first place?’

‘Answer the question!’

‘Nobody sent me! I came of my own accord.’

The Countess spoke through clenched teeth. ‘Doctor, the more you try to convince me you are a fool, the more I am likely to think otherwise. It would be the work of only a moment to have you killed...’ Her eyes strayed to Romana. ‘…put it down!’

Romana had found the elaborate box the Countess had left on the table. She frowned, and looked up at their hostess. ‘It’s one of those puzzle boxes, isn’t it?’

The Countess nodded, thin-lipped. ‘It’s a very rare and precious Chinese puzzle box,’

she confirmed, ‘which you won’t be able to open, so put it down!’ There was a note of desperation in her tone as she recalled her husband’s words - if anything should happen to that bracelet…

Romana ignored the instruction, and deftly turned the box over in her hands. There were several clicks as she pressed it and then slid the lid off. As it clattered down onto the table she removed the bracelet and held it up for all to see. ‘Oh look!’ she exclaimed delightedly, like a child who had just been given a new toy.

‘Yes,’ said a voice from across the room. All eyes turned to its direction. Count Scarlioni stood in the doorway, as casual and radiant as ever. The Countess noticed tacitly that his skin was clear, his complexion unblemished. He took a few steps into the room.

‘Pretty, isn’t it?’

‘Very,’ Romana agreed. ‘Where’s it from?’ she enquired.

‘From?’ the Count echoed, smiling as he approached her. ‘It’s not from anywhere,’ he said evasively. ‘It’s mine,’ he stated coldly, snatching it from her and turning back to his wife. ‘And who are these delightful people?’

The Countess smiled slyly. ‘My dear, these,’ she said indicating the Doctor and Romana, ‘are the people who stole it from me in the Louvre.’

‘Oh!’ Scarlioni’s eyes lit up, and he turned back to observe their guests.

The Doctor gave him a cheery wave. ‘Hello there!’

‘Well, well, well,’ Scarlioni murmured. ‘How very interesting. Two thieves enter the Louvre gallery, a gallery which contains some of the most priceless works of art in the world, and come out...’ he frowned, ‘with a bracelet!’ He fixed the Doctor with a quizzical expression. ‘Couldn’t you think of anything more…interesting to steal?’

‘Well,’ explained the Doctor, ‘I just thought it was very pretty.’

Scarlioni raised an eyebrow, which the Doctor took as an indication to elaborate.

‘Lovely elaborate design, wonderful craftsmanship... very pretty. Very, very pretty.’ He paused for a moment before adding, ‘Of course, it would have been much nicer to have stolen one of the paintings...’ He grinned. ‘…but I’ve tried that before, and all sorts of alarms and things go off, which disturbs the concentration…’

Scarlioni was laughing. ‘Yes,’ he agreed, ‘yes, I imagine it would.’ The man before him was clearly an imbecile. ‘So,’ he summarised, ‘you stole the bracelet simply because it was pretty?’

‘Yes!’ exclaimed the Doctor, and gave the Count an inquiring look. ‘Well I think it’s pretty…don’t you?’

Scarlioni chuckled. ‘My dear,’ the Countess whispered, ‘do be careful. I don’t think he’s quite as stupid as he seems.’

‘My dear,’ the Count replied succinctly, ‘nobody could be as stupid as he seems!’

He turned back to address their guests, smiling broadly. What were the chances of this man knowing what the bracelet really was? ‘This interview is at an end. I think you’ve told me all I need to know.’

‘Good!’ The Doctor jumped to his feet and placed his glass down next to the discarded puzzle box on the table. ‘We’ll be off then! A quick stagger up the Champs Élysées, perhaps a bite at Maxim’s... what do you think, Romana?’

Romana stood up. ‘I think perhaps we’d better check it’s all right with Maxim first,’ she began.

It was clear that the Count didn’t care what Romana thought. ‘I think a rather better idea would be if Hermann were to lock you all into the cellar. I should hate to lose contact with such...’ He paused, searching for an appropriate adjective, ‘...fascinating people.’

Whilst the Count was speaking, Duggan had quietly and unobtrusively got to his feet and moved behind the imposing figure of Hermann. In the belief that he was unnoticed, the detective snatched up a chair and prepared to strike Hermann over the head with it.

This would surely be one of the greatest escapes of all time.

He hadn’t reckoned on the Doctor.

‘Duggan!’ he hissed. ‘What are you doing?’

Duggan stuttered, lost for words as all eyes turned in his direction and he realised how stupid he looked holding a priceless antique chair in mid-air.

‘Put it down!’ the Doctor ordered sharply, and shook his head in astonishment as Duggan obediently lowered the chair to the floor. ‘For heaven’s sake, that’s a Louis Quinze!’

‘But…’ protested Duggan.

‘Just behave like a civilised guest!’ the Doctor snapped, and bowed politely to Scarlioni. ‘I do apologise, Count,’ he muttered humbly.

‘Oh no, that’s quite all right,’ Scarlioni assured him.

The Doctor turned to the butler. ‘Now then, Hermann if you’d be kind enough to show us to our cellar, we’d be terribly grateful...’ His voice tailed off as he, Romana and Duggan were shown out of the room at gunpoint.

Count Scarlioni watched them leave, then wandered over to the drinks table and poured himself a cognac. ‘What a charming man,’ he mused aloud.

The Countess nodded. ‘Stupid, but yes, very charming.’

The Count poured a second glass and handed it to his wife. ‘Not quite so stupid,’ he corrected her. ‘There’s something about that man...’

‘Do you think he knows what the bracelet really is?’

The Count shook his head. ‘I doubt it.’ He held up the bracelet and eyed it thoughtfully.

‘You really should be more careful with your little trinkets, my dear,’ he advised, slipping it on to her wrist. She smiled and took another puff of her cigarette.

‘After all,’ he added with a smile, ‘we do have a Mona Lisa to steal...’

Their glasses clinked together in a toast to their endeavour.

‘So tell me, Hermann,’ said the Doctor as they were directed down the cellar stairs by the surly revolver-wielding butler, ‘how long has the château been here?’

‘Long enough,’ grunted Hermann.

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‘Really?’ The Doctor did his best to sound enthusiastic. ‘That long? Restored four or five hundred years ago, something like that?’ he ventured.

‘May have been,’ came the customary grunt.

‘Good! I like indirect answers.’ The Doctor reached the bottom of the staircase. ‘Very stimulating,’ he said in reference to the château while surveying their new surroundings,

‘very stimulating. This would be the cellar then, would it?’

Hermann sighed. Why he had been allowed to kill those two henchmen but not this infuriating trio was quite beyond him. ‘Doctor,’ he said, ‘your boring conversation does not interest me in the slightest. If you would be so kind as to end it, I will resist the urge to dis-obey my master’s orders and kill you.’

‘Now you’d get into quite a bit of trouble if you did that Hermann, and we both know it,’ the Doctor reminded him.

The burly butler disagreed. ‘Not necessarily. I could say you tried to escape.’

The Doctor ignored this threat and his attention fell upon Kerensky’s over-conspicuous machinery. ‘Good grief!’ he exclaimed. ‘A laboratory! Are you locking us into a laboratory?’

Hermann opened a small barred cellar door. ‘In here!’

The Doctor’s face fell. ‘I’d much rather stay out here,’ he said, wandering over to Kerensky’s equipment. ‘This looks so interesting.’

‘In here, I say!’ demanded Hermann.

The Doctor reluctantly obeyed and followed Romana and Duggan into the tiny cell. In the dim light from the laboratory they could see a lantern perched on a small table. ‘You may light it if you wish,’ said Hermann as he tossed the Doctor a matchbox.

Romana wrinkled her nose in disgust. ‘How long’s this thing going to last us?’ she asked.

‘Two hours... maybe three,’ Hermann replied.

‘What happens after that?’

Hermann sneered. ‘After that,’ he said menacingly, ‘you won’t be needing any light.’

He slammed the door. They heard a key turn in the lock, and then the sound of his heavy feet stamping back up the staircase.

Duggan had been swallowing his fury since they had left the lounge. ‘Now what do you think you’re playing at?’ he demanded of his fellow inmates.

‘Ssssh!’ whispered the Doctor, and handed Duggan the matchbox. ‘Light the lamp.’

Duggan looked in the box. ‘There’s only one match,’ he objected.

‘Then you’d better get it right!’

‘Get it right?’ Duggan shook his head in disbelief. ‘You tell me to get it right? We could have escaped at least twice if you hadn’t...’

‘Exactly!’ cried the Doctor, and then brought his voice back down to a whisper.

‘What’s the point in coming all this way just to escape immediately?’ He grinned. ‘What we do is, we wait...’

‘Yes?’

‘We let them think they’ve got us safely locked up...’

‘Yes?’

‘And then we escape!’

‘Yes!’

‘Light the lamp.’

Duggan removed the single match and tossed the box into the darkness. Realising that he needed it to light the match, he felt around on the floor and retrieved it. Eventually he succeeded in lighting the lantern, and the cell was illuminated.

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The Doctor reached into his pockets and produced his sonic screwdriver. Going over to the door, he aimed it at the lock, but nothing happened. The Doctor frowned.

‘Well?’ asked Duggan.

‘It’s not working!’ the Time Lord replied, surprised.

Duggan sighed. ‘You and your stupid ideas...’ He snatched the sonic screwdriver from the Doctor and starting striking the door’s lock with it.

The Doctor wrenched it back. ‘Don’t!’ he cried indignantly.

‘Well what else are we meant to do with it?’ Duggan wanted to know. ‘What use is it?’

‘It was very useful against the Daleks on Skaro...’ the Doctor muttered, recalling the recent events that had given rise to the need for a holiday.

‘What?’

‘Oh, never mind.’

Duggan gave a despairing sigh and leaned against the door. ‘Great,’ he said. ‘Just great.

That’s all I need - locked in a cellar with no way out, and two raving lunatics for company!’

A whirring hum interrupted Duggan’s musings. The Doctor pushed past him and held his sonic screwdriver to the lock. ‘It’s working!’ he exclaimed delightedly. The lock clicked, and the Doctor pulled the door open. He gave Duggan a wicked grin. ‘Would you like to stay on as my scientific adviser?’

‘Doctor,’ called Romana, standing at the far end of the cell.

‘Yes?’

‘The horizontal length of these stairs is about... six metres, isn’t it?’ she enquired, pointing at the ceiling.

‘I suppose so,’ said the Doctor, not in the least bit interested. ‘So?’

‘Well, this room runs alongside the stairs, and it’s only two point seven three metres in length - approximately. Interesting, isn’t it?’

‘Fascinating... shall we look at the lab first?’

Once outside, Duggan made for the stairs. ‘Right, let’s get out of here.’

‘No!’ hissed the Doctor. ‘There’s bound to be a couple of guards at the top of the stairs!’

‘Exactly.’ Duggan clenched his fists. ‘I’m about ready to thump someone.’

‘Wait, let’s look at the lab first.’

‘What good does looking at the lab do?’

‘In the last few hours,’ said the Doctor, ‘I’ve been thumped, abducted and imprisoned.

I’ve found a piece of equipment which is not of Earth technology and I’ve been through two time-slips. I think this lab might have something to do with it!’

Duggan frowned. ‘What about the Mona Lisa?’

‘What about it?’

‘Do you think that the Count and Countess are out to steal it?’

The Doctor gave this some consideration. ‘Yes.’

‘I don’t know about you, but I’m going to stop them.’

The Doctor sighed, and moved to obstruct Duggan from mounting the stairs. ‘They’re not going to steal it at five o’clock in the afternoon!’

‘Why not?’ Duggan wanted to know.

‘Because the Louvre is still open! But while we’re here, why don’t you and I find out how they’re going to steal it, and why?’

‘Ah!’ The light dawned for Duggan.

‘Or,’ finished the Doctor, ‘are you just in it for the thumping?’

Duggan shook his head. ‘I’m in it to protect the interests of the art dealers who em-37

ployed me...’

‘Yes, yes, I know,’ cut in the Doctor, ‘but mainly for the thumping, yes?’

‘Yes.’

The Doctor attention focused on Romana, who had collected a few tools from the laboratory and was carrying them into the cell. He turned to Duggan and whispered, ‘What do you suppose Romana’s up to?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Nor do I,’ the Doctor admitted, ‘but it looks intriguing.’

‘I don’t care!’ Duggan declared. ‘I’m going!’ He strode purposefully towards the staircase and was halfway up when the door at the top began to open. Cursing silently, he rushed back down the stairs and he and the Doctor hurriedly scrambled into hiding in a shadowy alcove under the staircase.

Professor Kerensky closed the upstairs door behind him and began his weary and reluctant descent of the stairs. As he had expected, once the Count decided he had been allowed the minimum rest period, someone was shaking him awake and ordering him back to work. He was still dressing himself as he shambled his way down the stairs, pulling on his lab coat and glasses. He reached the foot of the stairs before taking a grubby handkerchief from his pocket and blowing his nose. Stuffing the handkerchief back in his pocket, he wandered over to his equipment, sighing. He was at a loss as to why the Count was so anxious to finish everything; the machine only needed a few more modifications. Would one extra day matter that much?

He went over to the incubator and took out an egg. It was gleaming white, perfectly shaped. He held it carefully in both hands, moving delicately over to the machine that dominated the laboratory. He placed it gently on the pad in the centre of the machine and stepped back. He crossed to the main control bank, began the start-up process and then returned to stand in close proximity to the machine, so that he could observe the egg in careful detail. Duggan stepped quietly out from the shadows and raised a fist to club Kerensky down, but the Doctor pulled him back. They watched silently as the points of the three projectors began to pulse with light.

The egg was enveloped in a green glow, then it began to shudder and the shell cracked.

A tiny chick emerged, resplendent in its coat of yellow down. The chick squawked and as the green glow increased in intensity it began to grow. Slowly at first, but within a minute it was a fully-grown hen.

Kerensky watched with only mild interest. He had seen it all before.

‘Which came first?’ said a voice from behind him, ‘the chicken or the egg?’

Professor Kerensky whirled around to see the grinning face of the Doctor. ‘Who are you?’ he demanded. ‘What are you doing here?’

‘Me?’ The stranger shrugged modestly. ‘I’m just the Doctor,’ he said, ‘and what you’re doing is terribly interesting - but you’ve got it all wrong!’

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5

The Art of the Matter

Count Scarlioni smiled as he looked around the lounge at the small gathering. His wife, Hermann and three of their hired men stood at his side as he placed a device similar in appearance to a small film projector on the table beside him.

‘A truly remarkable piece of equipment, I think you’ll agree.’ He reached out and took the bracelet from his wife. Opening a compartment in the top of the projector, he slotted it snugly inside. ‘It makes the impossible,’ he said as he turned the device on, ‘possible.’

The Countess felt a shiver run up her spine.

Scarlioni continued. ‘Perhaps Professor Kerensky should be here to see it. I should like him to know that whilst he is undoubtedly a genius, the man he is working for is altogether more clever.’

Hermann spoke on cue. ‘Without question, Sir. Shall I go and fetch the Professor, Excellency?’

‘Yes,’ the Count responded, then after a moment’s thought, changed his mind. ‘Ah, no.

I wouldn’t want to disturb the work... besides, I don’t think the Professor would be very amused!’

The members of the little gathering chuckled knowingly at this. The Count looked around at their expectant faces. ‘Are we ready?’

Hermann nodded. ‘Yes, Excellency.’

‘Then let us begin.’ Hermann dimmed the lights in the room whilst the Count activated the machine. There was a momentary bright flash of light and they all shielded their eyes.

When they looked again, the room had entirely transformed and now resembled the area of the Louvre in which the Mona Lisa hung. In the centre of what had just been the lounge, the famous painting now hung on a wall. A vague shimmering haze at the

edge of the wall was the only thing that betrayed the impermanence of the holographic projection.

‘Now we are in the Louvre,’ announced the Count. ‘As you can see, the Mona Lisa hangs on the wall behind a glass screen. This piece of defence is simple enough. To avoid it, we use our sonic knife.’

He signalled one of his men, who went up to the projection and produced a small pen-like object. A thin red beam of light appeared at its tip, and he used this to cut a large rectangular shape out of the screen, which he and another man then lifted down to the floor.

The second man reached through the hole to take the painting, and suddenly there was a hiss and six red vertical beams of light shot down in front of the painting.

Scarlioni chuckled. ‘And now we come to the second and far more interesting line of defence - the laser beams. Upset them, and every alarm in Paris will go off.’ He adjusted the projector. ‘With the aid of our particle beam transmitter, however, we deflect the beams, leaving the painting free for access.’

As he spoke, the device hummed, and the laser beams distorted, creating a gap large enough for the men to reach in and safely remove the painting. They held it up trium-

phantly, and the Count applauded. He then opened the projector and removed the bracelet, and then the interior of the Louvre, the glass on the floor and the Mona Lisa in the men’s hands faded quickly from sight, leaving the lounge as it was. Hermann reactivated the lights.

The Countess looked on in admiration. ‘My dear, you must truly be a genius!’

The Count smiled modestly. ‘Let’s just say I come,’ he murmured, ‘from a family of geniuses.’ He took hold of her arm and placed the bracelet back around her wrist. ‘A useful device. Wear it always.’

He gave her a smile, which she returned, and then he turned back to the others.

‘Tonight,’ he declared grandly, ‘enough of rehearsals. Tonight - the real thing!’

Professor Kerensky frowned at the man before him. ‘What are you talking about?’

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Well, you’re tinkering with time! That’s a bad idea unless you know what you’re doing.’

‘But I do know what I’m doing!’ snapped Kerensky indignantly. ‘I am the foremost authority on temporal physics in the whole world!’

‘The whole world?’ The Doctor tried to look amazed instead of mocking. ‘The whole world?’

‘Yes!’

‘Well,’ replied the Doctor, ‘that’s a very small place when you consider the size of the Universe.’

‘Ah!’ Kerensky smiled wistfully, ‘but who can, eh? Who can?’

‘Some can,’ the Doctor assured him, ‘and if you can’t, then you shouldn’t be tinkering with time!’

‘But you saw it work!’ persisted Kerensky. ‘The greatest achievement of the human race! A cellular accelerator!’ He gestured at the machine. ‘An egg, developed into a chicken in thirty seconds! With a larger model, I could turn a calf into a cow in even less time! It will be the end of famine in the world!’

‘It’ll be the end of you, never mind the cow! Look!’ The Doctor pointed to the machine. The chicken was now a skeleton, suspended upright in the green haze. It had been accelerated too far.

Professor Kerensky coughed, embarrassed. ‘Yes, well, there are a few technical problems - minor ones, though.’

‘A few technical problems?’ exclaimed the Doctor. ‘No, the whole principle you’re working on is wrong! You can stretch time forwards and backwards within that bubble, but you can’t break in or out of it. You have created a completely different time continuum which is totally incompatible with our own.’

‘I... I don’t know what you mean!’ stammered Kerensky.

The Doctor thought the problem over for a second and then approached the power console. ‘Have you tried doing this?’ he asked, and pulled a lever, flicking a few switches as he did so.

The machine audibly creaked - for a moment Kerensky thought it had broken down.

Then the skeleton reformed into a chicken, which gradually grew younger until the egg reformed around it.

‘That makes a rather more interesting effect, don’t you think?’ grinned the Doctor. ‘Did you know when you built it that it could do that?’

‘No!’ Kerensky stared at the egg, dumbfounded. ‘What did you do?’

‘I just reversed the polarity of the neutron flow! This is very expensive equipment, isn’t it?’

‘Very!’ the Professor confirmed. ‘The Count is very generous - a true philanthropist -

and I do not ask too many questions...’

‘Well you... wait a moment, what’s your name?’

‘Ah... Kerensky.’

‘Kerensky?’

‘Theodore Nicholai...’

‘Theodore Nicholai Kerensky? A scientist’s job is to ask questions! You should...’ The Doctor suddenly stopped in mid-sentence. In the green glow of the time bubble he could see a face forming. ‘Which came first?’ he mused to himself in amazement, ‘the chicken or the egg? Neither...’ The face was not that of a human. It was green and scaly with one eye...

The Doctor stared at the visage for some time. ‘Theodore,’ he said with a nervous edge to his voice. ‘Theo-’ He broke off. Professor Kerensky lay motionless on the floor, Duggan standing over him. The Doctor knelt down and examined the recumbent form and looked up at Duggan in surprise. ‘He’s fainted!’ he exclaimed.

Duggan shook his head. ‘No he hasn’t. I hit him. Now can we stop worrying about con-juring tricks with chickens and get out of here?’

‘That’s your philosophy, isn’t it?’ snapped the Doctor, getting up. ‘If it moves, hit it!’

He indicated the Professor. ‘He’ll be all right. If you do that just one more time, Duggan, I’m going to take very severe measures!’

‘Oh yeah?’ Duggan clenched his fists. ‘Like what?’

The Doctor’s voice lowered. ‘I’m going to ask you not to.’

‘Doctor?’ called Romana from the cell.

‘Yes?’

‘I was right!’

‘Were you? Good... what about?’

‘Those measurements. There’s another room bricked up behind this cell!’

The Doctor immediately went towards the cell. ‘Is this important?’ asked Duggan as he followed.

The Doctor turned back to him, a wicked grin across his face. ‘Let’s find out!’

Inside the cell, Romana had managed to remove a few bricks from the centre of one wall. The Doctor looked through the hole into the darkness beyond, and then selected a hammer from the small pile of tools Romana had brought in with her and began tapping at the other bricks.

‘Why do you suppose the Count’s got all this equipment, Doctor?’ Romana wanted to know.

‘Well, he seems to be financing some dangerous experiment with time.’ The Doctor stopped and considered. ‘The Professor, on the other hand, thinks he’s breeding chickens.’

Duggan snorted. ‘Stealing the Mona Lisa to pay for chickens?’

Romana frowned at him. ‘But who’d want to buy the Mona Lisa?’ she asked. ‘You can hardly show it if it’s known to be stolen.’

Duggan shrugged. ‘There are at least seven people in my address book who’d pay millions for that picture - for their own private collections!’

‘But no one could know they’d got it!’

‘It would be an expensive gloat,’ Duggan admitted, ‘but they’d buy it.’

The Doctor ceased hammering at the bricks and stepped back. ‘I’ve managed to loosen some of it,’ he announced, ‘but I’m going to need some machinery.’

Duggan suddenly had an idea. ‘Stand back!’ he cautioned. The Doctor and Romana shrugged at each other but complied. ‘I’ve got all the machinery I need,’ Duggan declared, 41

and with a fierce expression on his face, charged forward and slammed his shoulder into the wall. He repeated this action several times until the brick wall collapsed and he fell through the resultant hole. For once the Doctor appreciated Duggan’s brute strength. He picked up the lamp and stepped through the hole, followed by Romana.

The room was thick with dust and covered in cobwebs. The only feature was a row of cupboard doors along the opposite wall.

‘What do you suppose is in them?’ Romana ventured.

The Doctor shrugged. ‘They’ve obviously been here quite a long time…shall we have a look?’

He moved forward and brushed a layer of dust away from the top cupboard on the left hand side. He opened the door and looked inside. His face paled, and he looked closer.

Eventually he turned back to Romana and Duggan. His expression was a mixture of horror, surprise and fascination.

‘It’s a Mona Lisa,’ he murmured at last.

Duggan didn’t think he’d heard correctly. ‘What?’

The Doctor opened the cupboard door fully so that his two companions could see. And what they saw amazed them. A painting of a woman sitting, a woman with dark hair and no eyebrows.

‘It must be a fake,’ said Duggan, when he finally managed to find his voice.

The Doctor knelt down and examined the painting in greater detail, then looked back at Duggan and shook his head. ‘No,’ he replied, ‘no, I don’t know what’s hanging in the Louvre, but this is the real thing. This is the genuine Mona Lisa!’

Duggan frowned. ‘But how can you tell?’

‘The brushwork. It’s as authentic as the signature. This is Leonardo’s work, no doubt about it.’

Romana was more curious than puzzled. ‘What’s in the other cupboards?’

The Doctor obligingly moved to the bottom left cupboard door and again opened it just slightly, grinning as though he knew nothing could shock him more than the contents of the first cupboard. He peered inside and did a double-take.

With a glance back to the others, he opened the door fully. Inside it was another Mona Lisa. A look of concern had washed over the Doctor’s face and he opened the third cupboard, then the fourth, the fifth and the sixth. The three of them stood back to look at what the cupboards contained. No one said a word.

Inside each cupboard was a Mona Lisa. In total there were six Mona Lisas - all painted by Leonardo da Vinci, all the original article, all the genuine painting…

When the Count came down the stairs to the laboratory, the first thing he noticed was the unconscious body of Professor Kerensky.

‘Now, now, Professor,’ he murmured, ‘I’ve warned you about napping during work...’

He went over and shut off the still-running machine, and then noticed the cell door standing open. It took him only a moment to realise what had happened. Drawing a revolver from his jacket pocket, he approached the cell...

‘What do you suppose they’re doing there?’ Romana asked, breaking the long silence that had hung in the room as they stared at the Mona Lisas.

‘Gathering dust, I imagine,’ came the Doctor’s reply. ‘What I don’t understand is, why a man who already has six Mona Lisas should want to go to all the trouble of stealing a seventh!’

A revelation suddenly dawned upon Duggan ‘Come on, Doctor, I’ve only just told you!

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There are seven people in the world who would buy the Mona Lisa! In secret, naturally, but no one’s going to buy it when it’s still hanging in the Louvre!’

‘Of course!’ Romana exclaimed. ‘They’d each have to think they were buying the stolen one!’

It took the Doctor a few moments longer to catch on. When he did, he smiled. Then he laughed. ‘Of course!’ He clutched Duggan’s arm and grinned. ‘I wouldn’t make a very good criminal, would I?’

‘No,’ agreed a voice behind them. They whirled around to see Count Scarlioni standing in the entrance Duggan had only recently created. Scarlioni raised his revolver and aimed it at them with a smile. ‘Good criminals,’ he added, ‘don’t get caught.’

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6

Escape Into Danger

Count Scarlioni stooped slightly as he came through the entranceway and into the room but the gun in his hand remained level. He saw the open cupboards and chuckled. ‘I see you’ve found some of my pictures! Quite good, aren’t they?’ Then the smile evaporated and his tone was a cold, confident one. ‘By this evening I shall have a seventh.’

The Doctor frowned. ‘I don’t suppose you’d like to tell me where you got these?’

‘No.’

‘Or how you knew they were here?’

‘No.’

The Doctor paused. His next question ended up sounding more like a statement.

‘They’ve been here for a very long time.’

‘Yes.’

‘I like concise answers!’

‘Good.’ The Count frowned. ‘I came down here to find Professor Kerensky…’

‘Oh?’

‘...but he doesn’t seem to be able to speak to me at the moment.’

‘Oh!’

‘Can you throw any light on that?’

‘No.’

Duggan, tiring of this discussion, seized his opportunity. ‘I can,’ he said, and with that he snatched the lantern from the Doctor’s hand and hurled it at the Count while at the same time rushing forward throwing a nice, wide general punch designed to catch anything in its path. Moments later the room was pitch black and the Count was crumpled on the ground.

There was a long silence.

‘Duggan,’ the Doctor said at last, taking a deep breath, ‘why is it that every time I start to have an interesting conversation with someone, you knock him unconscious?’

‘Sorry, Doctor,’ Duggan shrugged sheepishly. ‘I didn’t expect him to go down so easily.’

‘Well if you don’t understand someone you shouldn’t go about hitting them!’

‘But that’s my job...’

‘Duggan!’ shouted the Doctor. ‘Your job is to stop Scarlioni’s men from stealing the Mona Lisa…’ He hesitated, remembered the six paintings behind them in the dark and corrected himself. ‘…the other Mona Lisa...’

They made their way out of the cellar and within moments the Doctor emerged from the door at the top of the cellar stairs that led into the main hallway of the château. He peered around the corner, saw that all was clear, and then walked casually out into the open. Romana then followed, nodding as the Doctor held his fingers to his lips and smiled. They moved quietly and both started suddenly as there was a crash behind them. Duggan smiled 44

apologetically as he pushed aside the table he had just knocked over. The Doctor and Romana glared at him and both held their forefingers up, partially knowing that where Duggan was concerned, all was likely to be in vain if they wanted to escape in silence.

Duggan’s expression suddenly altered and he tensed, pushing the Doctor and Romana flat against the wall as a gunshot rang out and a bullet whizzed past them, shattering the marble of a nearby statue and sending splinters of plaster through the air as it lodged itself in the wall behind. The three of them ducked back around the corner and Duggan took the lead.

He reached into his coat for his gun, and realised that of course he no longer had it.

Cursing that he hadn’t had the foresight to take the Count’s revolver as they had escaped the cellar, he risked a glimpse around the corner. Behind some plants in a large vase further up the hallway he could see a slim hand holding a gun. Another bullet was fired, nar-rowly missing Duggan’s head as he withdrew.

‘That way only leads back to the cellar,’ said Romana, indicating behind them.

Duggan stuck his head around the corner once more. Another bullet sped past.

‘Are you trying to get yourself killed?’ Romana asked.

Duggan shook his head. ‘There’s only one gun. What’s happened to those other thugs?’

‘They must be already en route to the Louvre,’ the Doctor said.

Duggan leapt past the exposed area of the hallway, dodging a fourth bullet as he ducked behind another antique table shielded by vases and sculptures. ‘Come on,’ he called, ‘with a bit of luck they’ve only got six bullets.’ Romana shrugged at the Doctor and then launched herself over towards the table as another shot was fired. Duggan looked for a suitable object and settled on a large ornate vase with delicate engravings. It weighed quite a bit, he thought as he picked it up, so should be quite adequate.

He waited until the Doctor acted as decoy for the last bullet, and then he charged down the hallway like a raging bull, hurling the vase as he went. The Doctor winced as they heard a loud resonating smash.

They emerged from their cover and went down the hall to where Duggan was standing over the unconscious Countess Scarlioni. A trickle of blood ran down her forehead and she was surrounded by fragments of shattered vase.

‘Sorry, lady,’ muttered Duggan with as much suaveness as he could muster.

‘I should think so, too!’ agreed the Doctor vehemently. ‘That was a Ming vase, Second Dynasty! Absolutely priceless!’

Duggan was singularly unimpressed. ‘What now?’

‘You’re going to the Louvre to stop that painting being stolen,’ the Doctor instructed.

‘Romana, you’re going with him. I’m going to visit a middle-aged Italian... late middle-aged Italian... early Renaissance, in fact. Old friend of mine…used to paint pictures...’

Night had fallen by the time the Doctor reached the Denise René art gallery, situated on the Boulevarde St. Germaine, close to the city centre. The gallery was locked up and the staff had gone home, so the Doctor got in using his sonic screwdriver.

He thought about the machine he’d seen in Scarlioni’s cellar and about what had happened to the egg when he’d reversed the particle accelerator. That green face that had appeared within the energy field of the machine was somehow familiar, but he couldn’t determine where he’d seen it before.

Inside the gallery he took out a torch and shone it over various pictures and exhibits.

Eventually the torch beam fell on a tall blue metropolitan police box standing in one corner. The TARDIS was hardly the most out-of-place exhibit amidst the bizarre collection on display in the Denise René gallery. Turning off his torch, the Doctor took a key from his 45

trouser pocket and inserted it into the keyhole on the Police Box. One of the double doors opened inward and the Doctor went inside.

‘Hello, K9!’ he called as he entered, ‘are you feeling better?’

A moment later the light on top of the police box began to flash, and with a wheezing groaning sound, the box faded away, leaving the darkened gallery in silence once more.

The TARDIS rematerialised and the Doctor emerged and surveyed his surroundings. All it took was a quick glimpse before he patted the TARDIS affectionately and said ‘Well done!’

The studio was a mess. It was 1505 and he was in Florence, only Leonardo would insist on him calling it Firenze. It might have been a decent-sized studio if it hadn’t been for the piles of paper, canvases, easels, paint and general clutter of disorganisation that seemed to come hand in hand with Leonardo. Sunlight streamed through the windows and the chatter of birdsong outside was musical. ‘Leonardo?’ the Doctor called.

There was no reply. He wandered over to the windows as he called out again.

‘Leonardo!’ He smiled as he caught sight of the pond outside, remembering Will and Leo tossing a protesting Napoleon into the water one midsummer evening. ‘Ah,’ he sighed affectionately, ‘that Renaissance sunshine!’ Remembering that Leonardo too loved that Renaissance sunshine, he called his friend’s name out the window in the hope that the painter was out in the garden.

No reply again, so he turned his attention back to the studio and thought of the fond memories the place resurrected. ‘Your paintings went down very well,’ he called.

‘Everybody loved them. The Last Supper... Mona Lisa... you remember the Mona Lisa, don’t you, Leonardo?’

He paused, half-expecting a reply, but continued when none was forthcoming. ‘Oh, come on, surely you remember the Mona Lisa - that lovely girl with the foul mouth and no eyebrows? Wouldn’t sit still? On my birthday? Mmmm?’

He spied something on one of the tables and picked it up. It was a sheet of parchment with diagrams on it - one of Leonardo’s theoretical drawings for a piece of machinery, in-spired as always by a drunken evening in which the Doctor let a little too much slip about the future. ‘Your idea for the helicopter took a bit longer to take off,’ he called, smiling at the pun, ‘but as I always said, these things take time...’

Suddenly he was aware of something cold pressing against his cheek. He turned and felt a sharp pain as something jabbed him. He took a step back and turned again, slowly this time. A man stood before him, dressed from top to toe in chain mail armour and a helmet with the beaver up so that the Doctor could see the man’s beady eyes and pudgy face. And, as he had suspected, the long sharp cold object the man had been holding against his cheek was a sword.

‘Who are you?’ the soldier demanded gruffly.

‘Me?’ the Doctor smiled. ‘Well, I just dropped by to see Leonardo. He hasn’t shifted, has he?’

The soldier sneered. ‘Nobody’s allowed to see Leonardo. He’s engaged in important work for Captain Tancredi.’

The Doctor’s mouth dropped open in apparent amazement. ‘Captain Tancredi?’

‘Do you know him?’

‘No,’ the Doctor admitted.

The soldier pressed the end of his blade against the Doctor’s shoulder. ‘He’ll want to question you.’

The Doctor smiled again. ‘Well I’ll want to question him as well, so we can both have a 46

nice little chat then, can’t we?’

‘He’ll be here,’ the soldier assured him, ‘instantly.’ He applied more pressure on his sword and forced the Doctor to his knees. The door creaked open. A tall imposing figure stood silhouetted in the doorway, sunlight streaming in behind him.

The Doctor looked up and recognised the face. ‘You!’ he hissed in surprise. ‘What are you doing here?’

The reply was calm and measured. If the newcomer was as surprised to see the Doctor he did a good job of concealing it. ‘I might ask you exactly the same question, Doctor!’

said the newcomer, as he strode into the room. He was tall, wearing elegant clothes tai-lored from leather and his shoulder-length grey hair was swept back. But despite the different attire and slight alterations in general appearance, it was still without question the same man the Doctor had last seen in Paris, 1979.

Scarlioni.

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7

I Have Heard Of Your Paintings Well Enough

The Louvre was as silent as a mausoleum. Romana and Duggan made their way by torch-light as quietly as they could through the building. In every chamber and every room they were presented with the same picture - security staff unconscious, innocent expressions on their faces.

‘I thought the Louvre was meant to be well-guarded,’ whispered Romana.

‘It looks as though every alarm in the place has been immobilised,’ Duggan observed.

‘A fantastic feat.’

‘The Count’s got some pretty fantastic technology,’ Romana reminded him.

‘How much nerve gas would it take to fill a building this size?’

‘Nerve gas?’ Romana frowned. ‘No, that would take far more men than we’ve seen in the Count’s employ to deploy. The authorities would have been alerted in moments. And we’d hardly be wandering through here unaffected, would we?’

‘So what do you suppose he’s done?’

‘Some sort of sonic pulse, I suppose. With equipment like that bracelet, they could easily knock out everyone in the building with minimal effort.’

As they entered the section that housed the Mona Lisa, the torch beam fell on the hud-dled form of a security guard lying face down in front of them. Duggan quickly examined the man, and saw the fatal bullet wound. ‘Another alarm’s been immobilised,’ Duggan quipped.

Romana scowled. ‘You’ve got a pretty cynical attitude to life, haven’t you, Duggan?’

‘Well, when you’ve been around as long as I have...’ Duggan hesitated. ‘How old are you anyway?’

‘A hundred and twenty-five.’

‘What?!’

Romana shone the torch beam around the gallery walls. ‘It’s gone!’ she exclaimed.

‘The Mona Lisa’s gone!’

Sure enough, the section of wall where the famous painting had been displayed was now empty. The protective glass screen was propped up against the wall nearby, and the red light beams still shone down across the space, but there was no painting behind them.

‘That system should be absolutely impregnable!’ exclaimed Duggan in disbelief. ‘It can’t be turned off!’

‘Someone’s managed it somehow,’ replied Romana sourly.

Duggan went up to the wall. ‘The only way to get at the painting is through...’ In his demonstration Duggan waved his hand through one of the beams. Romana sank her face into her hands as alarms sprang to life throughout the vast building. You could have heard them miles away.

‘Hells bells!’ yelled Duggan over the din.

‘That’s what it sounds like!’ Romana agreed. ‘Let’s get out of here!’

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‘Split up,’ Duggan advised as they ran up the nearest staircase until they were at ground level. ‘We’ll meet back at the café.’

Romana glanced around the darkened room. ‘How do you suggest we get out?’ she enquired.

Duggan pointed. ‘See that window?’

‘Yes?’

In reply Duggan charged, and took a flying leap. A further cacophony of alarms began screaming as he catapulted through the window, a shower of glass following him. Romana sighed, and hurriedly made her way towards the recently-formed escape exit route. In the distance she could hear approaching police sirens...

Professor Theodore Nicholai Kerensky awoke with a throbbing headache. Uneasily, he got to his feet and looked around for the tall, curly-haired man who seemed to understand temporal theory better than himself, but the laboratory was empty. He staggered over to the cell, hoping to find the stranger in there, but it had been also been vacated.

The hole smashed in the brick wall however aroused his curiosity, and he climbed through into the small inner chamber. The first thing he saw was a painting.

‘Mona Lisa!’ he gasped in sheer astonishment.

Then he saw the other five paintings. He shook himself to make sure he was not still asleep.

‘Mona Lisas!’ he corrected himself.

He was startled by a groan, and knelt down to find, to his additional astonishment, the unconscious form of Count Scarlioni. The Count was muttering something, and Kerensky leaned close to pick up the faint words.

‘Doctor,’ said Scarlioni, ‘would you care to explain to me exactly how you come to be in both Paris, 1979…’

‘…and Florence, 1505?’ finished the man who called himself Captain Tancredi.

The Doctor was seated in a chair at a table in Leonardo’s studio. The soldier stood at the door, and Captain Tancredi loomed over the Time Lord with a venomous glare in his eyes. ‘I’m waiting, Doctor.’

‘Well,’ said the Doctor, ‘I do get about a bit, you know.’

Tancredi raised an eyebrow. ‘Through time?’

‘Yes, I suppose so.’

‘How, exactly?’

The Doctor seemed to recall having been in this very situation but a few hours ago, in a different time and place. He wondered if the same strategy of deflection would work a second time. ‘I don’t know,’ he said with the same innocent grin that had infuriated the Scarlionis, ‘I just don’t seem to be able to help myself. There I am, just wandering along, mind-ing my own business, and then pop! Suddenly I’m on a different planet, or maybe even in a different time... but enough of my problems. What are you doing here?’

Tancredi considered the Doctor’s question. ‘Very well,’ he conceded at last, ‘I shall tell you. The knowledge will be of little use to you as you will shortly die.’ He paced slowly to the other side of the room and then, after further hesitation, turned back to face the Doctor.

‘I am the last of the Jagaroth,’ he announced sternly. Any trace of humour, irony or charm had vanished from his features. ‘I am also the saviour of the Jagaroth.’

The Doctor gave him another of his grins. ‘Well,’ he said in a jovial tone, ‘if you’re the last of them, then there can’t be all that many about to save...’ The Doctor broke off as the full implication of Tancredi’s words finally registered. ‘Did you just say Jagaroth?’

Tancredi was surprised. ‘You’ve heard of us?’ he enquired.

At last the pieces seemed to fit into place. The events of the past few hours and the alien face he had seen in the energy field of Kerensky's machine connected themselves with what Tancredi was now telling him and distant memories of childhood, distant memories of a cold Gallifreyan day spent with his mentor away from the mundane daily life of the classroom. 'Jagaroth…yes, you all destroyed yourselves in some massive war... what...'

'Four hundred million years is the figure you are looking for, Doctor.'

'Is it really? How time flies,' quipped the Doctor flippantly, and then his voice took on a serious tone. 'So what are you doing here?' he asked again.

'Surviving,' the Captain replied bluntly. 'The prime motive of all species.' The Doctor frowned, so Tancredi elaborated. 'We were not all destroyed. A few of us escaped in a crippled spacecraft and made planet fall on this world in its primeval time. We found it to be uninhabitable.'

The Doctor nodded. 'Yes, well, four hundred million years ago it would have been a bit of a shambles…no life to tidy it up.'

Tancredi continued with his story. 'We tried to leave but the ship disintegrated. I was caught in the warp field and splintered. Those splinters of my being are now scattered through time - all identical, none complete.' Tancredi stared at the Doctor. 'I am not, however, satisfied with your explanation. How do you travel though time?'

'Well, as I said...'

Tancredi turned away in frustration at the Doctor's persistent evasiveness and noticed the TARDIS standing unobtrusively in the corner. 'What is that box?' he demanded.

'What box?'

'That box!'

'Oh, that box! I don't know, I've never seen that box before in my life... ah!' The Doctor caught sight of a painting propped up on an easel beside the TARDIS and, leaving his seat, darted over to investigate it. It was a woman with no eyebrows and in his mind's eye the Doctor could see her seated in this very room, complaining and cussing. 'The original, I presume?' he smiled as he examined the brushwork. 'Completed in 1503... it's now, what, 1505, and you're getting the old boy to knock off another six for you, which you then brick up in a cellar in Paris for Scarlioni to find in four hundred and seventy four years' time - that's a very nice piece of capital investment!'

'Doctor, I can see that you,' observed Tancredi in tones identical to Scarlioni's, 'are a dangerously clever man. I think it's time we conducted this conversation somewhat more formally.' He turned to the soldier. 'Hold him here,' he ordered, 'whilst I collect the instruments of torture.' The soldier obediently came over and held the blade of his sword close to the Doctor's throat.

Tancredi opened the door. ‘If he wags his tongue,’ he advised the soldier as he left,

‘confiscate it.’

The Doctor frowned. ‘How am I supposed to talk if you confiscate my tongue?’

‘You can write, can’t you?’ he heard Tancredi call.

For a few minutes they waited in silence and then the Doctor looked up at the soldier.

‘He’s mad, isn’t he?’

The soldier remained impassive.

‘Must be a tough job humouring him,’ the Doctor went on.

Still the soldier said nothing.

The Doctor frowned. ‘You don’t believe all that, do you?’

The soldier frowned back at him. ‘What?’

‘All that nonsense about Jagaroth spaceships...’

The soldier’s reply was blunt and to the point. ‘I’m paid simply to fight’’

The Doctor nodded. ‘Yes, but when you think about all that stuff…Jagaroth spaceships and things...’

‘When you work for the Borgias,’ interjected the soldier, ‘you believe anything.’

‘The Borgias?’ hissed the Doctor. He nodded for what was not the first time in this conversation. ‘Yes, I see your point.’

‘As I said, I’m paid simply to fight.’

‘As I said, I see your point.’ The Doctor brushed the point of the soldier’s sword away from his face. He reached into his coat and the soldier immediately tensed. ‘No,’ the Doctor reassured him. He held up a small Polaroid camera. ‘It’s all right.’

The soldier frowned, far from convinced. ‘Come on,’ the Doctor urged. ‘Smile!’

The soldier wrinkled his face into a sort of contorted snarl.

‘Lovely!’ said the Doctor approvingly, and took his picture. When the photograph emerged from the camera, the Doctor held it up for the soldier to see. ‘There we are! Isn’t that nice?’

The soldier frowned and came nearer. The Doctor held the snapshot out. The soldier leaned forward to look at it. As he did so, the Doctor quickly brought his fist up to meet with the soldier’s jaw. Much as he resented resorting to Duggan-like tactics, the Doctor was still impressed at how quickly the soldier toppled backwards without a sound, and collapsed on the floor.

The Doctor didn’t waste a moment of the time he had bought himself. He ran over to the Mona Lisa. Six boards of canvas, all the same size as the finished painting, sat on a stool beside it. The Polaroid camera disappeared back inside his coat and in its place he pulled out a chunky blue felt-tip marker pen. He dropped to one knee, placed the first canvas board on the floor, took the lid off the pen and wrote ‘THIS IS A FAKE!’ on the clean white canvas in large capital letters. He then pulled the second canvas off the pile and, putting it on top of the first, again wrote ‘THIS IS A FAKE!’ in the same large, clear writing.

He worked his way through the pile until all six boards had ‘THIS IS A FAKE!’ written on them. He replaced the pile on the stool, putting the top board face-down so that when Tancredi returned he would not notice that they had been defaced.

Next he took out a writing pad and tore a sheet of paper from it. He dashed off a quick note with the felt-tip pen but formed all the letters backwards so as to render them unintel-ligible. He placed the note on the table by the canvas boards, and then snatched up a small mirror which he placed, standing on its side, next to the letter so that it reflected the words into a readable form.

The Doctor turned to leave but before he could even contemplate entering the TARDIS

he found himself facing Captain Tancredi.

‘Just about to pop off through time again, Doctor?’ the Captain enquired. ‘How very discourteous, especially when I had just gone to all the trouble of fetching the thumbscrews!’

The Doctor sighed. This just didn’t seem to be his millennia.

Count Scarlioni’s eyes flickered open. It was dark but he could make out that he was lying on his back. A strange creature, looking like a startled bird, was looking him right in the eye. As his eyes regained the ability to focus he recognised the creature.

‘Kerensky,’ he muttered.

The Professor leaned closer. ‘Yes, Count?’

Scarlioni peered into the gloom. ‘Where am I?’

‘You are in Paris, of course!’

‘Paris... perhaps it was a dream...’

Professor Kerensky had sat in stunned silence while Scarlioni had deliriously rambled about Doctors, da Vinci and time travel. ‘Who... who are you?’

‘I am who I am, Kerensky,’ the Count replied curtly, and struggled to his feet with the Professor’s assistance. ‘I am the one who is paying you to work. Now get to it!’ The Count felt his forehead. He could feel that the skin was starting to peel off. ‘Time is short.’

‘But…your face!’

Scarlioni rounded on him. ‘You pick a quarrel with my face, Kerensky? Take care I do not pick a quarrel with yours, for I will use instruments somewhat sharper than words.’

‘Who are the Jagaroth?’

‘So!’ the Count exclaimed. ‘It was not a dream!’ He pointed at Professor Kerensky.

‘The Jagaroth…you serve the Jagaroth. Now work!’

The Professor frowned at the Count’s statement. ‘It... it is the Jagaroth who need all the chickens?’ he asked, puzzled.

Scarlioni burst out laughing. ‘Chickens? It never ceases to amaze me that such a giant intellect can live in such a tiny mind!’

The Count’s laughter was abruptly stifled.

There was a voice in his head, a distant sound, calling to him from the past. He closed his eyes and thought back four hundred million years. Scaroth… said the voice. Scaroth…

Scaroth! He opened his eyes and stared accusingly at the terrified Professor Kerensky. But the voice continued its chant. Scaroth…Scaroth!

‘I must think,’ the Count whispered. ‘I must have time to think...’

‘What have you been making me work for?’ Kerensky pleaded. ‘I thought we were working to save the human race!’

‘The human race?’ The Count gave a short sharp laugh. ‘We are working for a far greater purpose…on a scale you could not possibly conceive.’ He looked Kerensky in the eye. ‘The fate of the Jagaroth is in my hands. You will work for my purpose willingly…or unwillingly!’

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8

‘The centuries that divide me shall be undone!’

For much of the night Café La Vache had been the epitome of darkness and silence. The darkness was broken by Romana turning on her torch, carefully closing the front door behind her. She had used her sonic screwdriver to unlock the front door. As she put it back inside her coat she made a mental note to tell the Doctor about it. She had been fed up with continually borrowing his only to find it did not work properly, so she had decided to make one of her own, and as far as she was concerned it was a vast improvement on the Doctor’s own.

The silence in the café was broken, literally, as Duggan smashed the window of the back door, put his arm through and unlocked it. He opened the door and came in, glass crunching underfoot as Romana wearily shook her head.

‘I thought these places were meant to be open all night,’ he complained as he made his way over to the bar and took an overturned stool from the top of the counter, placing it upright and slumping heavily onto it, his elbows up on the bar and his worn, tired face cra-dled in his hands.

Romana came out from behind the bar with two glasses and a bottle of wine. ‘You should go into partnership with a glazier,’ she advised as she sat down on a neighbouring.

‘You’d have a truly symbiotic working relationship.’

Duggan frowned. ‘What?’

‘I was just pointing out that you break a lot of glass,’ she explained. She couldn’t get the cork out of the bottle of wine and handed it over to him.

‘You can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs,’ he replied, and as if to illustrate his point, smashed the top of the bottle open on the edge of the bar and then poured wine into the two glasses. He took a swig and grimaced.

‘That’s not the correct way to drink red wine. You’ll make yourself sick.’ Romana looked over his handiwork as he stood the broken bottle upright in front of them. ‘If you wanted an omelette, I’d expect to find a pile of broken crockery, a cooker in flames, and an unconscious chef.’

‘Listen,’ objected Duggan, tiring of all the criticism he had received ever since meeting the Doctor and Romana. ‘I get results.’

‘Do you?’ Romana was almost amused. ‘The Count’s got the Mona Lisa.’

‘Yeah,’ mused Duggan, ‘all seven of them.’ He sipped his wine a bit more carefully, and then looked up at Romana. ‘You know what I don’t understand?’

‘I expect so.’

If Duggan picked up on this latest criticism, then he chose to ignore it. ‘There are seven potential buyers and exactly seven Mona Lisas.’

‘Yes?’

‘And yet six of them have been sitting bricked up for centuries...’

‘What, buyers?’

‘No! Mona Lisas!’ Duggan frowned. ‘How did the Count know where they were - and how to find them?’

‘It taxes the mind, doesn’t it?’ Romana nodded.

‘You can say that again,’ Duggan agreed.

‘It taxes the mind, doesn’t it?’ Romana repeated.

‘Couldn’t you tell that was meant to be rhetorical?’ growled Duggan.

‘No, I couldn’t,’ said Romana.

‘So was that,’ he grumbled, and took another sip of his wine.

Count Scarlioni came back into the laboratory holding a bulging folder under his arm. He strode over to Professor Kerensky’s workbench, brushed aside a pile of notes and equipment, and laid the folder down.

‘You will now see the true end product of your labours,’ he announced grandly, and opened the folder to display sheets of circuit diagrams and instructions. ‘This is what you will now produce for me.’ He glared at the Professor. ‘Look at it!’

The Professor leafed through the top few pages of plans, examining them in some detail, and then looked up at Scarlioni. ‘But... but Count, this machine... it is precisely the reverse of what we... of what I have been working on!’

The Count nodded. ‘But you will agree that the research you have done under my guidance works equally well in either direction.’

Kerensky’s expression was one of horror. ‘But it would mean increasing the very effect I was trying to eliminate!’

There was an almost murderous gleam in Scarlioni’s eyes. ‘Precisely!’

‘But... but the scale of this... Count, what you are trying to do is monstrous! It’s beyond imagining!’

Scarlioni nodded again. ‘But you will do it!’

‘No!’ the Professor insisted. ‘A thousand times no! Even if I wanted to, I could not!’

‘Oh?’ Scarlioni raised an eyebrow. ‘And why is that?’ he enquired.

‘Equipment on this scale…power on this scale! It would cost millions and millions!

Even you, Count, could not afford such things!’

‘Excellency!’ There came a shout from the top of the stairs. It was Hermann, a large parcel under his arms. ‘Excellency!’ He came dashing down the stairs into the laboratory.

He put the parcel up on Kerensky’s blackboard stand and tore open the brown paper wrap-ping it with a shriek of triumph. ‘The Mona Lisa is no longer in the Louvre!’

‘Excellent, Hermann!’ cried the Count as he joined Hermann in tearing off the remaining paper to reveal the Mona Lisa beneath it. ‘Excellent!’

Professor Kerensky watched in dismay whilst Hermann continued gleefully. ‘The moment the news breaks, all seven of our buyers will be ready!’

‘And how much money will this bring us, Hermann?’

Hermann’s beady little eyes shone with greed. ‘Over a thousand million dollars!’

The Count burst out laughing and turned to Kerensky. A smile of happiness was stretched across his face. Kerensky shuddered at the sight of the peeling, blistering skin.

‘Continue with your work, Professor! Enjoy it, or you will die!’

‘Ouch!’

The Doctor sat at the table in Leonardo’s studio once more. Captain Tancredi was seated across the room on a leather chair that had been a gift to the painter from Thomas Chippendale and the recovered soldier was placing the Doctor’s thumbs in the thumbscrews.

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Tancredi frowned. ‘I haven’t started yet.’

‘I know…it’s just that his hands are cold.’

‘So sensitive...’ Tancredi smiled. ‘I think we’re in for a little treat.’

‘All this is totally unnecessary, you know,’ the Doctor objected.

‘You make it necessary, Doctor,’ Tancredi reminded him. ‘You will not tell me the truth.’

The Doctor considered this for a moment. ‘I’ve changed my mind,’ he said at last. ‘If there’s one thing I can’t stand, it’s being tortured by a man who’s got cold hands. Now what was it you wanted to know?’

Tancredi smiled. ‘Excellent. Now we appear to be getting somewhere. I want to know how you travel through time.’

‘Simple!’ the Doctor replied in a patronising tone. ‘I’m a Time Lord.’

‘A Time Lord?’ Tancredi’s eyes widened. ‘I thought they were the stuff of legend.’

‘According to Time Lords, Jagaroth are the stuff of legend,’ shrugged the Doctor with a smile, ‘so there you are.’

‘And the girl?’ Tancredi registered the change in the Doctor’s features as concern clouded the Time Lord’s face. ‘The truth, Doctor.’

‘Well...’

‘Time is running out, Doctor.’

‘What do you mean, time’s running out? It’s only 1505!’

Tancredi signalled to the soldier, who moved forward to tighten the thumbscrews. ‘All right!’ conceded the Doctor, before the soldier had even touched him. ‘I’ll tell you.

There’s one thing I’d like to know, though. How do you communicate with your other splinters across time?’

‘I’m asking the questions!’ thundered Tancredi.

Count Scarlioni stood in the lounge of the château, staring at his reflection in the mirror over the fireplace. All over his head his skin was peeling. He looked at his hands and they too were flaking and blistering. Outside it was raining. A sound behind him made him start.

‘Why do you still worry, my dear?’ asked the Countess, crossing to him, cigarette in hand. ‘We’ve done it! We have the Mona Lisa! Think of the wealth that will be ours!’ She positioned herself behind him and began gently caressing his shoulders.

‘Wealth is not everything,’ he murmured.

‘Of course not,’ she agreed. ‘The achievement!’

‘Achievement?’ The Count laughed bitterly and pulled away from her touch. ‘You talk to me of achievement because I steal the Mona Lisa? How do you think a man might feel to have caused the pyramids to be built? The heavens to be mapped? Invented the first wheel? Shown the true use of fire? Brought a whole race up from nothing, to save his own race?’

The Countess frowned at her husband’s words. ‘What are you talking about? No one can achieve everything.’

‘I do not ask for everything,’ he replied with an uncharacteristic self-pity. ‘I ask for but a single life, and the life of my people.’

The Countess was mystified. ‘Are you feeling all right, my dear?’

Scarlioni could no longer hear her. Once again there was a voice in his mind, reaching out to him from across time.

Scaroth... it called. Scaroth...

Sweat ran down his forehead. ‘Please,’ he said, ‘leave us.’

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‘Us?’

‘Me, leave me!’

The voice grew in intensity, beyond Scarlioni’s ability to ignore it. Scaroth!

‘Are you sure?’ the Countess asked, genuinely concerned for her husband’s well being.

She looked at him in horror as he turned away. There seemed to be something rippling under the skin at the back of his neck.

‘Go!’ Scarlioni pressed his hands over his ears in an ineffectual attempt to block out the voice. ‘Go! Get out!’

The Countess hurriedly complied, pulling the doors shut behind her.

As the skin of his face peeled away and the horrific thing beneath burst free, Scarlioni sobbed in agony.

It was a barren, waste of a planet.

It was large enough to contain life and yet it was far too desolate to support it. In this part of the galaxy planets like this one were not uncommon. The planets that could support life within this system were vastly outweighed by those that could not.

A yellow sun in the blood-red sky overlooked the lifeless hell. There was nothing; no plant or animal life. Just amino acids bubbling away in the dead soils, waiting for fertilisation. Sand blew across the bare landscape.

A large globe, black with silver bands around its centre, crouched on the desert sands suspended by three claw-like projections. The surface was covered with silver jagged designs and tiny rectangular lights. It was a Jagaroth spacecraft.

On the globe-shaped craft's upper hemisphere, a hexagonal view port covered the ship's tiny warp control cabin. Computer panels lined the walls and consoles encircled the chair occupied by the Jagaroth pilot, Scaroth. He surveyed the bleak landscape with weariness.

For a moment, Scaroth thought he could see something glinting across the horizon. He peered closer at the observation window. Was that a flashing light he could see?

No. Scaroth dismissed the thought immediately. He had been in the control room far too long; his eye was beginning to play tricks on him.

He ignored the unappealing world around him. It was of no interest to him whatsoever.

He was one of the last of a dying race.

The last of the Jagaroth.

The last hope.

The only hope.

The Jagaroth was worn and tired as he leaned back in his chair. He watched with disinterest as utterly useless information downloaded on the screen in front of him. He barely bothered reading the display. It would only be a confirmation of what he already knew -

that this ship was doomed. And if this ship was doomed, so were they.

The communicator activated, and a harsh voice filled the control room. 'Twenty solits to warp thrust.'

Scaroth gave a grunting sound which might have been a sigh. 'Confirmed,' he replied with evident reluctance

There were only a handful of them alive now. Now that the war was nearing its terrible and bloody end, only a small number of Jagaroth survived from what had once been a race of millions. And it was this barren, lifeless world, galaxies away from where it had all begun, that would be the last battlefield in a war that had lasted a decade. The atmosphere aboard the craft had been one of utter despair when they had landed on this world. After ten long years in deep space the last thing they had anticipated was to return home to find 56

their planet utterly ravaged and their race all but obliterated, innocent victims in the machinations of foolish power-hungry politicians. It was an immense weight to bear and none of them had the strength to bear it alone. When they returned to Jagara it had been with excitement at the prospect of the scientific discoveries they brought home with them.

And now all their artistic and scientific achievements were nothing compared to the basic struggle for survival.

The communications channel opened again. ‘Thrust against planet surface - increase to power three.’

‘Negative!’ Scaroth grunted. He flicked a switch on his visual display unit and studied the readout. It confirmed his worst suspicions. ‘Power three is too severe!’ he objected.

‘Scaroth, it must be power three,’ persisted the disembodied voice of the engineer on his team, deep within the bowels of the craft. ‘It must be!’

Scaroth tried to reason with the voice. ‘Warp thrust from planet surface is untested! At power three it will be suicidal!’

His objections were ignored. ‘Ten solits to warp thrust.’

‘No...’ murmured Scaroth.

An alarm began bleeping rhythmically, accompanied by a flashing light. The engineer persisted. ‘The Jagaroth are in your hands . Without secondary engines we must use our main warp thrust! You know this, Scaroth. It is our only hope.’ There was a pause, and then the next words were spoken with great emphasis. ‘You are our only hope!’

But Scaroth knew that the voice was wrong. There was no hope at all. Not for him, not for his people.

‘Three solits to warp thrust.’

Scaroth grew more anxious. ‘No! What will happen if...?’

The voice was oblivious to his protests. ‘Two solits.. .one...’ Scaroth tensed, dreading the next words. ‘Full power!’

Scaroth activated the main drive. A loud grinding, humming sound filled the cabin, and the ship began to vibrate alarmingly.

No... cried a voice that seemed to come from within Scaroth’s head. No, don’t press it...

don’t press the button...

It was a choice between perishing on the barren surface, and taking their chances on the ship surviving the journey to another more favourable world. Scaroth took the gamble.

Reaching forward, he depressed the lift-off button on his console.

The three sturdy legs on the lower half of the ship retracted inwards as the Jagaroth craft rose slowly into the air and hovered a few hundred metres above the ground. The silver bands around its centre vibrated and spun. The ship began to rise higher and higher into the atmosphere.

Scaroth felt the g-forces from the warp thrust tugging at his weakened body. His stomach churned, and his head felt dizzy, but he had achieved what he feared was impossible -

the ship had taken off.

Then the inevitable happened - something went wrong.

Another alarm rang, this time not just in the control room but sounding throughout the whole ship. The other Jagaroth heard it, and when the realised what it meant they contacted their pilot once more.

‘Scaroth... what is happening?’

The ship was spinning faster and faster. The stresses were beginning to tear the hull apart.

‘Help us, Scaroth! The fate of the Jagaroth is in your hands! Help us!’

But there was nothing Scaroth could do. He couldn’t even move far enough to turn off 57

the communicator that was ringing in his ears.

‘Help us, Scaroth! You are our only hope!’

Scaroth glared at the communicator. Now they knew he was right, he thought. It was cold comfort.

‘Help us, Scaroth!’

I can’t! his mind screamed.

The voices continued. ‘You are our only hope!’

The alarm stopped.

‘Our only hope!’

The ship shuddered.

‘Our only hope!’

The ship exploded.

The blinding white glare filled the sky for a full minute before it died away. In that time the spacecraft blew itself into a million fragments.

The Jagaroth spacecraft was torn apart in a blaze of light and flame.

Life ended.

Radiation mixed with primordial soup. Amino acids hissed and separated. Radiation and amino acids somehow fertilised one another.

Life formed.

The last thing Scaroth heard was the sound of his people crying out in pain and then being suddenly silenced. He felt the distortion of the ship's unstable warp field as it enveloped the control chamber, tearing at his body; dragging him into the vortex of the space/

time continuum...

The long war was over.

The Doctor stared at Captain Tancredi. 'Are you all right?'

Tancredi nodded, trying to fight whatever it was that was afflicting him. He could hear a voice at the back of his mind. 'Continue,' he instructed, gesturing to the soldier. He swayed unsteadily. 'The interface of the time continuum is unstable,' he called, as if he were holding a conversation with a ghost. 'I know that! Yes... all right... yes, tell me something useful!' Tancredi shook his head. 'Wait!'

The Doctor nodded. 'Righty-oh.'

'No... not you, continue.'

The Doctor continued what he was doing: using his teeth to unfasten the thumbscrews.

The soldier was watching the distressed Captain. When he glanced back to the Time Lord, the Doctor stopped. He beckoned the soldier close and whispered, 'Is he often like this?'

The soldier leaned closer and whispered back, 'I'm not paid to notice.'

Tancredi was lurching around the studio, almost completely delirious. His arms flailed about wildly and he knocked over various objects in his path. The soldier watched his master in despair.

The Doctor finished his task, and suddenly leapt to his feet and dashed over to the waiting TARDIS. The soldier turned back and raised his sword with some difficulty as it now appeared to be quite heavy. He was rather startled to find that a set of

thumbscrews were now fastened to the end of it. By now the Doctor was inside the TARDIS and had slammed the door behind him.

‘Captain!’ the soldier exclaimed, gesturing at the police box. If he had been paid to notice such things, he would have seen that the Captain’s skin appeared to be blistering and peeling.

‘I know...’ muttered Tancredi. Sweat ran down his forehead. ‘Leave us.’

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‘Us?’

‘Me, leave me!’

The voice was ringing in Tancredi’s head. Scaroth!

Tears streamed down his face as he fell to his knees. ‘I’m coming...’ he sobbed.

The voice continued. ...We are Scaroth... I am Scaroth... me, Scaroth - me, one! The Jagaroth are linked through me!

Tancredi, in 1505, heard the voice. So did Scarlioni in 1979, and others - a Sumerian, a Phoenician, a Roman, an Egyptian, a pirate, a priest, an aristocrat... twelve guises, all scattered through the ages, all one, heard the voice. Together we will take this race of puny creatures and shape their destiny to meet our ends! Soon we shall be one! The centuries that divide me shall be undone! The centuries that divide me shall be undone!

Tancredi screamed out as one with the voice in his head. ‘The centuries that divide me shall be undone!’

As the pain receded in his head and the voices faded, the tall blue police box gave a wheezing groaning sound and dematerialised from Leonardo da Vinci’s studio. Tancredi watched it leave, and through his eyes, so did his other selves.

‘So,’ murmured Count Scarlioni in 1979, as his human skin rapidly grew back into place over the green scales, ‘the Doctor is the secret…the Doctor and the girl.’

The TARDIS rematerialised in the Denise René art gallery, and the Doctor emerged looking very concerned. He had watched Tancredi’s outburst on the TARDIS scanner. ‘“The centuries that divide me shall be undone” ...’ he recited. ‘I don’t like the sound of that,’ he said to himself. He closed the TARDIS door behind him and hurried from the gallery.

Outside in the City of Light, a new day was dawning.

59

9

But Look; The Morn In Russet Mantle Clad…

Romana sipped her coffee and sighed.

Jaques had arrived to open up Café La Vache at 7 am. He had not been all that surprised to find that a window pane in the back door had been smashed and that two people had set up camp in his café and polished off a bottle of his best shiraz. After all, this was Paris, and things like that happened here all the time. Rather than make a fuss, he had accepted their apologies and the strange currency with which Romana had paid him for the damage to the door. He could only assume that a 'narg' was whatever passed for money in backward countries like Poland. However European currency was European currency, be it Polish or not, and he could easily include it in some tourist's change and be rid of the stuff.

He made Romana and Duggan a pot of coffee, turned the television on, cursed the weather and set about the daily routines.

Duggan was fast asleep, his face flat on the table top. The red wine had not agreed with him and he had spent the night getting more and more miserable and indulgent while Romana tried to think rationally about the situation. 'Your coffee will get cold,' she eventually said.

Duggan jerked into instant wakefulness. He sprang to his feet and drew his gun, his gun-arm sending his cup spinning sideways to the right, over the edge of the table and to the floor with a ceramic crash. The debris and liquid left a surprisingly large pattern over the floor.

Jaques sighed and picked up a dustpan and a dishrag.

Romana offered Duggan her half-full cup. 'Have some coffee,' she suggested.

He did so. The aftertaste of red wine made it the worst mouthful of coffee he'd ever had, so he spat it out again. Jaques wondered how long it would be before a customer finally drove him over the edge.

'That's it,' Duggan said at last, slumping back into his seat and putting away his gun.

‘I’m sent to Paris to find out if anything odd is going on in the art world, and what happens? The Mona Lisa gets stolen right under my nose. Odd isn’t in it.’

Romana took a notepad from inside her coat. ‘I’m going to leave a note for the Doctor.

I think we should go and get it back.’

‘Which one?’ Duggan was incredulous. ‘I’ve seen seven! What am I going to see today? Two Arc de Triomphes? Half a dozen Eiffel Towers lying around?’

‘The real Mona Lisa!’ Romana sighed. ‘The original!’

‘Then how the hell do you account for all the others?’

‘I don’t know. Perhaps you’re right. Perhaps Scarlioni has found a way of travelling through time. Perhaps he...’ Romana fell silent, as a sudden thought occurred to her.

‘Perhaps,’ she continued slowly, ‘he went back in time, had a chat with Leonardo, got him to rustle up another six, then went forward in time, stole the one in the Louvre and then sold all seven at an enormous profit!’

For a moment Duggan was silent. ‘I used to do divorce investigations before I was a detective,’ he said earnestly. ‘It was never like this.’

‘There’s only one flaw in that line of reasoning I can see,’ said Romana. ‘That equipment of Kerensky’s wouldn’t work effectively as a time machine.’

‘It wouldn’t?’

‘No. You see, you can have two adjacent time continuums running at different points...’

Duggan saw no point in arguing and simply agreed with her as best he could. ‘You can.’

‘...but without a field interface stabiliser you can’t cross from one to the other.’

‘You can’t.’ He was despairingly out of his depth.

Romana shrugged. ‘I’m just guessing, of course. Come on, let’s get back to the château where at least you can thump somebody.’

Duggan’s eyes lit up. That, at least, he could relate to. Romana quickly scribbled a note on her pad, tore the paper off, handed it to Jaques and then she and Duggan ran for the door, leaving almost as noisily as they had arrived.

It was 8.05 am when the Doctor arrived at the Louvre. Waving an old UNIT pass around got him past the police cordon and towards the entrance where he was greeted by a pair of security guards. ‘Well?’ he asked, doing his best to act authoritative. ‘What news?’

‘Sir, it is very grave,’ one of the guards replied. ‘The painting of the Mona Lisa has been stolen!’

‘What?’ This time the Doctor did his best to act surprised. ‘That’s terrible!’ He pushed past them and hurried into the building.

Often he had found that if you pretend to be in control of a situation and act as though you have every right to be somewhere you haven’t, no one will question your presence there. This morning exactly that philosophy was in practise. Inside, the Louvre was swarming with activity - police investigators were dusting the glass screen for fingerprints, interviewing gallery staff, and examining a smashed window on the floor above the gallery. There were probably more people in the building than would have been had the painting still been on display.

The Doctor looked around and caught sight of the Louvre guide he had met the previous day. She was being questioned by a police officer. When he had finished talking and put away his notepad to move on to another member of staff, the Doctor approached her and tapped her on the shoulder.

She gave a cry as she turned and recognised him.

‘Ssssh!’ the Doctor cautioned. ‘I was just wondering... you didn’t happen to notice two people here last night trying to stop that painting from being stolen, did you?’

She frowned. ‘Monsieur?’

‘One was a fair-haired pretty girl, the other a man; kept hitting people...’ The Doctor raised a fist to illustrate his description, and the startled guide cried out again. ‘Sssh!’

hissed the Doctor. ‘Did you see them?’

‘No, monsieur, but perhaps you should speak to the police…’

‘No, no time,’ replied the Doctor hurriedly. ‘I’ve got the human race to think about.’ He leaned close, and whispered the words for greater effect. ‘The human race..!’

The guide stared after the Doctor’s retreating back, his words echoing in her mind. Last night she had drafted her notice; now she figured if she waited a couple of days, she could claim job-related stress and claim a huge compensation settlement. It was the man in the scarf that had driven her to it.

‘...was painted by Leonardo da Vinci in 1503 and is considered to be the most famous painting of all time. The theft occurred at approximately eleven o’clock last night. Police have made no comment thus far on how it is possible that all the security systems surrounding the painting came to be deactivated...’

The Doctor caught a brief glimpse of an image of the Mona Lisa on the television set on top of the bar as he entered Café La Vache. Everybody’s attention was fixed to the television, numerous cups of coffee growing cold as all sat, astonished at the news.

‘Patron,’ the Doctor said, ‘were there two people in here earlier?’

Jaques nodded.

The Doctor frowned. ‘How long ago did they leave?’

Jaques shrugged.

The Doctor frowned again. ‘Did they say where they were going?’

Jaques shook his head.

The Doctor frowned for a third time. ‘Did they leave a note or something like that?’

Jaques rummaged under the bar and produced the note Romana had left. He handed it to the Doctor and returned to watching the news.

‘They can’t have been mad enough to go back to the château,’ he muttered as he opened the note and read aloud, ‘Dear Doctor, gone back to the château.’

The Doctor bit his lip. He thanked Jaques, stuffed the note into his pocket and left the café at a run, his scarf flapping behind him.

‘...and the weather will be mostly fine with occasional showers...’

‘As soon as the alarm sounded, Excellency, she was halfway through the window and he was outside.’ Hermann sneered as he pointed his gun at Duggan and Romana, who stood before the Count in the château lounge with their hands raised. ‘They cannot be professionals! I thought you would wish to speak to them, so I called off the dogs.’

Scarlioni got to his feet. He had changed his suit and his usual calm, suave air was re-stored. ‘My dear,’ he said to Romana, ‘you did not have to enter my house by...’ he chuckled to himself, ‘well, one could hardly call it stealth. You only had to knock on the door.’

‘You’d better not touch her, Scarlioni,’ Duggan warned futilely.

‘I’m quite capable of looking after myself, thank you,’ Romana muttered under her breath.

Count Scarlioni continued. ‘I’ve been looking forward to renewing our acquaintance. In fact, I was almost on the verge of sending out a search party. You’ve saved me the trouble, however. Come and sit down.’

He went over to the Louis Quinze chairs and sat on one, gesturing to Romana to do the same. Romana did so, with her hands still raised. Scarlioni chuckled and motioned to her to lower them. Whereas the Doctor’s pretending to be an idiot was merely irritating, Romana’s was somehow charming.

‘Don’t lay a finger on her,’ growled Duggan threateningly.

‘Oh do shut up,’ sighed Scarlioni.

Duggan did as he was told.

Scarlioni turned back to Romana. ‘You have some information that could be very valuable to me,’ he revealed, ‘concerning temporal physics.’

Romana gave a look of innocent surprise. ‘Who, me?’

Scarlioni nodded. ‘I understand you are a considerable authority on time travel.’

Romana shrugged. ‘I don’t know who could have given you that idea.’

‘Your friend the Doctor, actually.’

‘The Doctor?’ responded Romana. ‘But he’s in...’ She broke off, but had already said

enough.

‘...Florence, 1505,’ the Count finished for her. ‘That’s where I... er, we met him.’

‘Leonardo will get mad if you don’t call it Firenze,’ said Romana inaudibly.

From where he stood Duggan asked, ‘Is this a private conversation or do you need a licence?’

The Count looked up. ‘If he interrupts again, Hermann,’ he ordered, ‘kill him.’

It was evident from Hermann’s response that he would derive considerable satisfaction from carrying out this order. ‘With pleasure, sir!’ He released the safety catch on his revolver and pressed the barrel firmly against Duggan’s temple.

The Count smiled. He liked to keep his staff happy. He turned his attention back to Romana. ‘Would you like to examine the equipment?’ he invited.

‘And if I refuse?’

The Count sighed. ‘Must we go into vulgar threats?’ he smiled. ‘Shall we just say that if you refuse, I will use the machine to destroy Paris?’

‘And how am I supposed to be sure you can do that?’

‘You can’t until you’ve looked at the equipment!’ Scarlioni laughed. ‘Checkmate!’

The Doctor ran through the streets of Paris, pushing through the crowds of people. His twin hearts beat rapidly in his chest as he paused briefly to catch his breath. He had to get to the château before Scarlioni captured Romana and Duggan.

He had the strangest feeling that he was already too late. Surely, he thought to himself, that was the most ridiculous contradiction in being a Time Lord - this continual race against time. He remembered that lovely evening in Firenze and wondered what his drink-ing comrades that weekend would have thought at how poorly he managed his time…

‘Well?’

Romana turned and looked back to Duggan. She, Duggan and Scarlioni stood around the Particle Cellular Accelerator. Hermann’s gun was still pressed to Duggan’s head and Professor Kerensky stood in the background, pleased for an interruption but also irritated at continually being interrupted.

‘What?’ she asked.

Duggan indicated the machine. ‘Can he?’

‘Destroy Paris? With this lot?’ Romana’s burst out laughing and Duggan was nearly relieved until he saw what the expression on her face actually conveyed. ‘No problem.

He’d blast the whole city through an unstabilised time field.’

‘What, do you really believe all this time travel stuff?’

‘Do you believe wood comes from trees?’ Romana retorted instantly.

Duggan frowned. ‘What do you mean?’

‘It’s just a fact of life I was brought up with,’ she replied

‘So now you accept the truth of my words?’ the Count enquired in his Cheshire Cat voice.

‘That you can destroy Paris?’ Romana nodded. ‘Yes.’

‘Why all this talk of destruction?’ Professor Kerensky interjected. ‘What is going on?

What are you doing with my work?'

A thought struck the Count. 'Professor, I shall show you,' he decided. 'Would you care to examine the field generator?'

Kerensky frowned. 'Why? There was nothing wrong with it when I last used it.'

'Professor!'

'Oh, very well,' grumbled Kerensky, baffled. He wandered over to the machine and 63

stood on the central pad. He knelt down to examine the device in question.

'You will now see,' the Count addressed his audience, 'how I deal with fools.'

Kerensky recognised those words and turned white with fear. 'No!' he cried. 'Not that switch!' But he spoke too late. The Count glared at the little scientist as he pressed a switch on the control panel. Kerensky jerked and twisted as the projectors on the machine began to pulsate and enveloped him in a pool of green light. His mouth fell open in a silent scream of agony.

Romana and Duggan watched in horror as wrinkles appeared on Kerensky's face. His hair began to grow longer and turned grey. First a moustache and then a beard rapidly grew over his face. His body became hunched over and he collapsed on the pad. His spec-tacles slipped off his face and smashed. His skin paled, and his clothes turned to rags. His hair began to thin out as he gradually went bald.

With the next pulse of the machine, all that remained of Professor Theodore Nicholai Kerensky was a withered rotting skeleton.

There was an appalled silence, broken only by Count Scarlioni roaring with laughter.

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10

So Full Of Artless Jealousy Is Guilt

‘The unfortunate effect of an unstabilised time field,’ announced Count Scarlioni as he switched off the machine. ‘I shall do the same thing to the whole city unless you reveal to me how to stabilise that field.’

Duggan looked down at the remains of Professor Kerensky and then back at the Count.

‘You’re mad!’ he hissed. ‘You’re insane... inhuman!’

Scarlioni nodded. ‘Quite so,’ he agreed. ‘When I compare my race to yours - human - I take the word inhuman as a great compliment.’

Romana stepped between them. ‘Count, you must have realised by now that I’m not from this planet,’ she said calmly. ‘Why should it bother me if you destroy Paris?’

Duggan’s mouth dropped open in sheer amazement. ‘What are you talking about?’ he cried. ‘That’s...’

Scarlioni cut in. ‘You’ve had more than enough warnings,’ he snapped. ‘Kill him, Hermann.’

Hermann flicked back the hammer on his pistol with his thumb and his features broke out with a malicious smile. Duggan closed his eyes and prepared for death.

‘No!’ shouted Romana.

Scarlioni signalled to Hermann to stop. The butler very reluctantly lowered his gun. The disappointment on his face was clear. Scarlioni glared at Romana triumphantly. ‘You do care! I think you’ve answered your own question. Not a very clever bluff.’

‘All right,’ she said, ‘what are you trying to do?’

Scarlioni studied her face intently. ‘You agree to co-operate, then?’

‘Just tell me what it is you want done and I’ll see.’

‘Excellent.’ The Count turned to his sulking butler. ‘Hermann, take Mister Duggan away and lock him up. I shall keep him as an insurance policy,’ he told Romana as Hermann locked Duggan back into the cell, ‘since it is unfortunately not possible to kill him twice.’

Romana shrugged. He could not say the same about her.

‘Now my problem is this,’ Scarlioni explained. ‘Four hundred million years ago, the spaceship I was piloting exploded while I was trying to take off from the surface of this planet.’

‘That was clumsy of you,’ commented Romana.

‘A calculated risk. The spaceship had sustained considerable damage previously. I was in the warp control cabin and when the explosion occurred I was flung into the

time vortex and split into twelve different parts which lead, or have led, independent - but connected -

lives in times in this planet's history.' Scarlioni nearly smiled. 'Not a very satisfactory mode of existence.'

Romana frowned. 'So you want to reunite yourself?'

'More than that.' Scarlioni did smile this time. 'I want to go back to where my space-

ship is... was… and stop my original self from pressing the button and attempting to leave the planet.'

Romana burst out laughing. 'And you were hoping to do that with this lot?' she asked, pointing at Kerensky's machine.

Scarlioni weathered her hysterical outburst impassively. 'You underestimate the problems with which I was faced. My twelve various selves have been working through history to push forward this miserably primitive race - ' and Romana would be the first to agree with such a judgement ' - so that even this low level of technology would be available to me now.'

'But this won't work!' Romana insisted. 'Put yourself in that bubble and you would either regress back to being a baby again, or,' she indicated the crumbled remains of Kerensky, 'go forward to old age.'

'I had worked out a way,' Scarlioni admitted, 'but it would have taken rather too long.

Now, with your help, I shall be able to return with ease.'

There was a moment's silence. They both knew what it was he would ask of her.

'Build me a field interface stabiliser,' he ordered.

Romana sighed and reluctantly agreed; after all, it appeared she had no choice.

The Doctor was forced back at gun point by one of Scarlioni's thugs. '...Well you see, I'd like to make an appointment to see Count Scarlioni at his earliest convenience if you don't mind...' Hands raised, he entered the lounge, followed by the thug. He bumped into a cleaning maid. 'Ah! At last, someone in authority! I wonder if you'd be kind enough to tell Count Scarlioni that I wait upon him, please?' The maid bowed, said something in French, and left. 'Thank you!' the Time Lord called after her.

The thug gestured with his gun for the Doctor to sit down. 'How could I refuse such a well-spoken request?' said the Time Lord with a grin, and sat in the same Louis Quinze chair that he'd used on his last visit. It looked, he thought, suspiciously like the one that had been in Leonardo's studio. 'Hello, old faithful,' he said to the chair

and gave it a pat, bestowing upon it the level of affection he usually reserved for his TARDIS.

He looked up at his guard. ‘So how’s your end of the deal?’ he enquired conversationally. ‘I suppose a job like this is well paid, hmm?’

The thug said nothing. The Doctor recalled a similar conversation he’d had all of four hundred years ago. He had a very finely-tuned sense of déjà vu. ‘I sometimes thought about becoming a thug,’ the Doctor went on, ‘but I’ve never really had the right face for it, don’t you think? Or the hair. How many thugs have you seen with curly hair, eh? Not many, I’ll bet. Still, I’m also too tall. Did you know that one planet in the Andromeda system actually has a height restriction on thugs? You’re only allowed to be five foot seven.

Don’t ask me why.’ He frowned. ‘Oh, you didn’t.’

The thug seemed barely aware of the Doctor’s presence. The Doctor considered testing how much the guard noticed by trying to escape, but he did not really want a bullet in the back of his head as evidence that the thug was actually paying attention.

‘Silent type, eh?’ The Doctor smiled. ‘I once knew a boy like you…never said a word.

Very terse. Well, I said to him, ‘There’s no point in talking if you’ve got nothing to say’.

He did well in the end, though. Name of Shakespeare.’ He gave the thug a thoughtful stare.

‘Ever read any Shakespeare? No? Oh well. How about you, Countess?’

The Countess stood in the doorway. She nodded as she entered the room. ‘A little.’ She went over to the far side of the lounge where she twisted the head of a small statue. A panel in the wall slid open to reveal a hidden bookcase. ‘We have the second Quarto of Hamlet…’

‘There are only five extant copies of that in the world,’ said the Doctor, impressed.

‘Really?’ The Countess didn’t miss a beat. ‘We have twelve.’ She ran her fingers along the spines of several volumes and then found the one she was looking for. She then passed the book to the Doctor. ‘The first draft,’ she said casually.

‘The author’s foul papers…’ The Doctor’s eyes widened in surprise, to her pleasure.

‘These have been missing for centuries!’ he exclaimed in a reverent whisper, as he flicked carefully through the pages.

‘It’s quite genuine,’ the Countess assured him.

The Doctor nodded. ‘I know, I recognise the handwriting.’

‘Shakespeare’s?’

‘No, mine,’ he replied quite seriously. ‘Will had sprained his wrist writing sonnets.’

The Countess raised an eyebrow but said nothing.

The Doctor browsed through the book, sighing affectionately. ‘Wonderful stuff,’ he enthused, and then found a passage of text which he read aloud. ‘‘To be, or not to be, that is the question: Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them.’’ The Doctor stopped reading, and frowned. ‘‘Take arms against a sea of troubles?’ That’s a mixed metaphor!’ Suddenly he seemed to be angry. ‘I told him that was a mixed metaphor, but he would insist!’ He fumed as he glanced at the surrounding text, his own handwriting crossed out and replaced in the margins with Will’s.

The Countess was by now laughing uncontrollably. ‘Oh Doctor,’ she said, wiping tears from her eyes, ‘I’m quite convinced that you’re perfectly mad!’

The Doctor grinned. ‘Nobody’s perfect,’ he replied, and suddenly his features became all stern. ‘Do you think I’m mad because I say I’ve met William Shakespeare?’ He held up the book. ‘When Will died he left behind no books, no manuscripts, no letters, nothing.

Where do you suppose your precious Count got this from, then?’

Her face betrayed concern, and she defensively snatched the book back. ‘He’s a collector,’ she said quickly. ‘He has money and contacts.’

‘Contacts,’ the Doctor echoed. ‘Human contacts?’ he enquired casually. ‘How much do you really know about him, eh?’ He studied her worried expression. ‘I think rather less than you imagine...!’

Hermann bolted down the stairs into the laboratory. ‘Excellency!’ he shouted.

The Count cut him off in mid-sentence. ‘Don’t tell me,’ he predicted. ‘The Doctor’s here.’

Hermann was somewhat taken aback. ‘Why... yes, sir! So I’ve only just been told by the maid...’

A cruel smile formed at the corner of Scarlioni’s lips. ‘I knew it!’ he hissed. ‘Bring him down here.’

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Hermann obediently, and retreated back up the stairs.

Romana looked up from her work assembling the components for the field interface stabiliser. ‘Count, I suppose you...’

He cut her off in mid-sentence as well. ‘Shut up,’ he snarled, ‘and get on with your work.’

Romana too was taken aback. She glared at the Mona Lisa, still perched on its stand. ‘I bet you never got treated like this,’ she muttered.

Romana was wrong, and had she known it, she would have probably been very surprised.

67

‘How long have you been married to the Count?’ the Doctor ventured.

The Countess lit a cigarette and took a puff before answering. ‘Long enough.’

‘Long enough... oh, I like that!’ The Doctor smiled. ‘I do like that! Discretion and charm - so civilised! So terribly unhelpful!’

‘Discretion and charm…’ She smiled. ‘I couldn’t live without it, especially in matters concerning the Count.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘There is such a thing as discretion,’ he told her. ‘There’s also such a thing as wilful blindness.’

‘Blind?’ The Countess laughed. ‘I help him steal the Mona Lisa - the greatest crime of the century - and you call me blind?’

‘Yes!’ insisted the Doctor, quite seriously. ‘You see the Count as a master criminal, an art dealer, and you like to see yourself as his consort.’ His voice lowered to an urgent whisper. ‘But what’s he doing in the cellar?’

The Countess shrugged. ‘I don’t know! Tinkering... every man must have his hobby.’

‘Man?’ The Doctor raised an inquisitive eyebrow. ‘Are you quite sure about that? A man with one eye…and green skin? Ransacking the great art treasures of history so that he can make a machine to reunite himself with his people, the Jagaroth?’ He chuckled. ‘And you didn’t notice anything,’ he scowled. ‘How discreet... how charming...’

But the Doctor’s words failed to have the desired effect; the Countess was once again laughing hysterically.

Hermann entered the room, gun in hand. ‘Excuse me, My Lady,’ he said courteously, and then sneered at the Time Lord. ‘Doctor, the Count is very anxious to see you in the cellar.’

‘Well I’m very anxious to see him,’ the Doctor replied approvingly, ‘otherwise I wouldn’t be here.’ As he was led out by Hermann and the thug, he stopped momentarily and looked back at the Countess. ‘Think about it,’ was all he said, and then the three men left.

The Countess’ mirth quickly subsided as the Doctor’s words sank in. She thought very hard about everything he had said. Suddenly she recalled something she had once seen that had disturbed her, and extinguishing her cigarette, she went over to the hidden bookcase and put down the manuscript of Hamlet. She searched through the bookcase, taking each book out and putting them neatly in a pile on the floor. Then she found what she was looking for. She opened the cover of a book to reveal a hollowed interior with several scrolls hidden inside. The first one she opened - Gallileo’s map of the heavens - she put aside; the second scroll was the one she was after. She went over to the table, brushed aside various items in order to clear adequate space, and unrolled the scroll out across the surface of the table.

It was an ancient Egyptian papyrus which documented the hierarchy of life in Egyptian society from its supposed beginnings and in order of importance, illustrated with the animal-headed figures of the Egyptian gods. She brushed the dust from the parchment as she examined the pictures clearly. Whoever said that pictures spoke a thousand words had been right.

Along from the line of men, on to cats and then through to gods was a vision that confirmed her fears. As with the rest of the representations of bipeds, it had a pink, masculine body and wore a white robe. But the difference in this case was that the head was a large green reptilian blob, with a single eye in its centre…

As her heart thumped wildly inside her chest and her temperature rose, the Countess began to entertain the fearful notion that the Doctor may have been right…

‘Ah, Count!’ cried the Doctor as he was once again led down the stairs into the cellar.

68

‘How lovely to see you again. I wonder if you could spare me a moment of your time...’

His eyes strayed to Romana, who was working on a piece of equipment the Doctor found disturbingly familiar. ‘Ah, Romana! Hello, how are you? I see the Count broke you in as a lab assistant. What are you making for him - a model railway? Gallifreyan

egg-timer?' The Doctor's voice lowered and became deadly serious. 'I do hope you're not making a time machine. I shall be very angry if I find out you are.'

The Count spoke. 'Doctor, how lovely to see you again,' he said pleasantly. 'It seems like only four hundred and seventy four years since we last met,' he couldn't resist adding with a smile.

'Indeed... indeed.' The Doctor grinned. 'I so much prefer the weather in the early part of the Sixteenth Century, don't you?'

'No, I don't think so,' replied Scarlioni bluntly.

The Doctor's face fell. 'What did your last lab assistant die of?' he enquired.

'Cellular acceleration,' said Scarlioni, indicating the pile of dust in the central pad of the Cellular Accelerator.

A sudden fear gripped the Time Lord. 'Where's Duggan?' he asked, staring at the ash.

'Get me out of here!' he heard a familiar voice call.

Relieved, the Time Lord turned and saw the detective peering out through the bars of the cell door. 'Ah, there you are Duggan. Behaving yourself? Good, good.' The Doctor turned back to Scarlioni. 'Now then, Count, this is what I've come to say.' He drew himself up and for a rare moment was deadly serious. 'If you're thinking of travelling back through time, you'd better forget it.'

The Count gave the Doctor a benign smile. 'And why do you say that?'

The Doctor's smile was just as wide. 'Because I'm going to stop you,' he stated matter-of-factly.

Scarlioni shook his head, laughing. 'On the contrary, Doctor, you're going to help me.'

The Doctor gave a frown of mock surprise. 'I am?'

Count Scarlioni nodded. 'You are indeed, and if you do not, it will be so much the worse for Mister Duggan, this young lady, yourself, and several thousand other people I could mention if I happened to have the Paris telephone directory on my person.'

The Doctor shook his head. Here once again was the serious side of the Time Lord that few adversaries of this incarnation had seen. 'That sort of blackmail won't work, Count, because I know what the consequences would be if you get what you want. I can't let you fool about with time!'

The Count laughed at the hypocrisy of the Doctor's words. 'And what else do you ever do?' he accused.

'Ah, but I'm a professional,' the Doctor replied firmly. 'I know what I'm doing. I also know what you're doing.' He glared at Romana, who held a device in her hands

which he feared was now complete and fully functional. ‘Romana,’ he ordered, ‘put that equipment down.’

Scarlioni smiled. ‘Doctor, I think we can dispense with both your interference and your help.’ He examined the device Romana had constructed. ‘Your friend has done her job very well indeed.’

‘Count,’ pleaded the Doctor desperately, ‘do you realise what would happen if you try to go back to a time before history began?’

‘Yes, yes I do.’ The Count gave a short laugh. ‘And I don’t care one jot.’ He nodded to Hermann. ‘Lock them in the cellar. They shall stay long enough to watch my departure.

After that, you may kill them in whatever manner takes your fancy.’ He was aware how much pleasure he denied his butler when he rescinded the order to kill Duggan earlier. He 69

hoped this would amply make up for it. ‘I shall make my farewells to the Countess,’ he said, and then departed, leaving the delighted Hermann to escort the two Gallifreyans back into the prison cell.

The Countess stood in the lounge.

She was quite calm. Her eyes were red from crying. The doors opened and Scarlioni entered the room. He smiled at her. She smiled in return and raised the gun in her hands and levelled it at him from across the room.

Scarlioni frowned. ‘My dear?’

‘Close the door,’ she snapped.

Amused, the Count gave her a smile but complied with her request. He turned back with an expression on his face that inquired if she was satisfied.

She was. She held the gun quite steady. ‘What are you?’ she asked simply.

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘What have I been living with all these years?’ she cried, her calmness dissipating.

‘Where are you from and what do you want?’

Scarlioni thought this over for a moment. ‘If I may be allowed to answer those questions in reverse order,’ he said, crossing the room towards her, ‘what I want is a drink.’

‘Stay back!’ she warned as he came closer and picked up a glass from the tray.

‘Will you have one?’ he asked as he poured cognac into the glass.

‘Put it down!’ she shrieked.

Scarlioni stopped and realised that, like the Doctor, his wife was deadly serious. He shrugged and put both the glass and the decanter back down on the table.

‘Now,’ she said, calm again and steadying her aim, ‘who are you?’

Scarlioni’s face became a blank, unreadable mask. There was no emotion, no feeling in his tone. ‘I am Scaroth,’ he said.

‘Scaroth,’ she whispered, unable to believe what was happening to her. Perhaps, she wondered to herself, she had hoped that at the last minute all would be well, everything would turn out all right.

‘I am the last of the Jagaroth,’ said Scaroth. He laughed harshly at her horrified, disbelieving expression. ‘It has not been difficult keeping secrets from you, my dear. A few fur coats... various trinkets... a little nefarious excitement...’ He paused to tear off a bit of loose skin dangling from his forehead.

‘Who are the Jagaroth?’ she demanded.

He turned away and looked across at the mirror. His human facade looked back at him.

‘The Jagaroth...’ he murmured. ‘An infinitely old race,’ he told her, ‘and an infinitely superior one.’ He smiled. There was no further need for disguise. ‘I shall show you what you want to know, my dear,’ he said, turning back to face her.

She frowned. His skin was peeling away, faster by the minute. Suddenly she saw that his face was puffing up, as though his glands were swelling uncontrollably. But it was not puffing up - she realised that his face was actually bulging, puckering, as if some unseen force was pushing the skin outward. She let out a silent scream as a crack suddenly ran down the side of his face and an entire chunk of it fell away. The same thing was happening all over his head - skin, hair and features were all falling away to reveal the creature beneath.

It was more horrifying than her worst nightmares. The green head was covered in scales and two tentacles protruded from the side of the face. The one eye with a green pupil in the centre of the forehead throbbed with evil.

It spoke. The voice was fierce and guttural. ‘I am Scaroth!’ the creature screamed.

Tears streamed down her face. She steadied her aim as the creature approached her and fired a shot directly into what she believed would be its heart.

Her knowledge of Jagaroth anatomy left a lot to be desired.

‘Through me my people will live again!’ the creature declared as it came closer. She could have sworn it was sneering at her. She fired another shot into the creature’s chest.

And another. And another.

‘I’m glad to see you’re still wearing the bracelet I designed for you, my dear,’ said the thing that had once been her husband as she fired another bullet at it. ‘As I said, it is a useful device!’

Reaching forward, the creature twisted the top of the ring on its finger.

The Countess felt a surge of pain up her arm and she dropped the gun. Crying uncontrollably, she fell to her knees and tried in vain to tear the bracelet from her wrist. She failed.

The pain was searing further up her arm now. It moved up her neck and into her brain.

She gave a final scream of agony before the pain overcame her and she fell forward on to the floor.

‘Such a pity...’ Scaroth knelt down to caress his dead wife’s neck. ‘Goodbye, my dear,’

he said with a note of regret in his voice. ‘I’m sorry you had to die... but then in a short while you will have ceased to have ever lived...’

Picking up her discarded gun, the creature turned and left the lounge, leaving the corpse of the Countess Scarlioni behind.

Quite dead.

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11

O! Call Back Yesterday, Bid Time Return!

‘If I’d known I was helping a Jagaroth,’ Romana murmured.

Duggan frowned. ‘Jagaroth?’ he nearly shouted.

‘Sssh!’ hissed the Doctor.

‘Sorry.’ Duggan lowered his voice. ‘What the hell’s a Jagaroth?’

The Time Lord looked grim. ‘They’re not nice to know.’

‘When I worked in the records department I came across the file,’ Romana agreed.

‘What a terrible waste of life. They had a horrific bacterial war which wiped out their entire race.’

‘Except for the ones who made it to Earth four hundred million years ago,’ said the Doctor. ‘I bet they weren’t mentioned by the Bureau of Ancient Records.’

‘So that’s why he had to go back in time! He had to reverse history in order to save the Jagaroth race.’ Romana’s face fell. ‘And I’ve made that possible.’

The Doctor nodded solemnly. ‘Yes. Without the stabiliser he only had the time bubble.’

Duggan cut in. Here, at least, was something Duggan had an understanding of. ‘And he couldn’t get into that. You saw what happened to the Professor - and the chicken.’

Romana nodded. ‘It doesn’t travel in time, it just goes forward and backward in its own life cycle. If he’d got into it he would have become a baby again.’

‘What he was really trying to do,’ the Doctor informed them, ‘was put the whole world into the bubble, like those time-slips when we first arrived.’

‘Of course!’ exclaimed Romana.

‘Cracks in time,’ the Doctor continued. ‘He shifted the world back in time only for two seconds, but what he was trying to do was shift the whole world back in time four hundred million years.’

‘But without the stabiliser he couldn’t have been there himself to save his ship.’ Romana looked perplexed. ‘But how would he get the power? It would have been fantastic!’

The Doctor sighed. ‘It’s a bit obvious, isn’t it? What do you think we’ve been chasing about all this time?’

The answer suddenly hit Duggan like a punch in the face might have done had Hermann been in the room. ‘The Mona Lisa!’ he cried. ‘Lisas,’ he corrected himself.

There was a short silence, and then the Doctor chuckled. ‘He couldn’t have sold them anyway,’ he grinned.

‘Why not?’ Duggan wanted to know.

‘Well,’ said the Doctor with a modest grin, ‘before Leonardo painted them, I wrote

‘THIS IS A FAKE!’ on the canvas of each painting - in felt tip. It would show up under any x-ray.’

Romana looked worried. ‘Doctor, there won’t be any x-rays for it to show up on if he gets back to that ship.’

‘No,’ the Doctor snapped accusingly, ‘because you supplied him with the vital compo-

nent he needed.’

Now it was Romana’s turn to wear a modest grin. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘but when I made that component, I rigged it so it could only go back in time for two minutes. After that he’d be catapulted forwards back to his own time here. Now he couldn’t do any harm!’

‘One minute would be sufficient time for him to go back, contact his ship and prevent it from exploding,’ objected the Doctor. ‘He wouldn’t then be splintered in time and history would be changed.’

‘We must do something to stop him!’ Romana insisted.

The Doctor nodded, and then suddenly his eyes lit up. He drew Romana closer and whispered, ‘I’ve got an idea.’

‘What?’ she whispered back.

A pause.

‘We’ll ask Duggan!’

Romana’s eyes lit up as well. The two Gallifreyans turned and called simultaneously,

‘Duggan!’

Duggan completed the triumvirate of modest grins. He knew exactly what they wanted.

It was nice to have his talents appreciated once in a while. ‘Right! Stand back!’

It would have been unwise of them not to.

Duggan gritted his teeth, charged forward and smashed the cell door open with his shoulder. Unable to halt his lunge, he continued his charge until he was tangled in a heap of laboratory equipment on the floor.

The Doctor and Romana exchanged smiles of satisfaction and then both walked out of the cell.

The Jagaroth stood in the centre of the time machine, the Countess' gun in its hand.

'You now see me as I truly am,' it said.

The Doctor nodded. 'Very pretty.'

'And now you will see the combination of my lives' work.'

'How very fulfilling for you,' the Doctor mused.

The Jagaroth ignored him. 'For thousands upon thousands of years my various splintered selves have been working for this moment. And now, with the aid of this device -' he gestured to the field interface stabiliser that was now wired into the console beside him. '-

so kindly supplied by the young lady, I shall be able to make this primitive equipment into a fully operational time machine.' /Romana dared to smile.

The Jagaroth noticed her expression. 'I am well aware of the limitations that were built into it, my dear. They will not affect the outcome. I shall return to my spaceship the moment before it exploded and stop myself from trying to take off.' The Jagaroth waved a hand towards the control panel. 'You will not be able to read the settings on the dial, Doctor. They will explode the moment I have left.'

The Doctor shrugged. 'Win some, lose some.'

The Jagaroth almost nodded. 'Goodbye, Doctor.' Whilst it covered the trio with the gun in one hand, the Jagaroth used the its other hand to operate the stabiliser. The machine hummed, the projectors pulsed, and the creature disappeared. There was a flash and then the control panel and the field interface stabiliser exploded.

'Well that's got rid of that, then,' murmured the Doctor, once they had all finished coughing from the smoke that filled the air.

'I need a drink,' muttered Duggan.

The Doctor examined the remains of the control panel and frowned. 'The fool! He's destroyed the fast return mechanism!'

Duggan frowned as well. 'What does that mean?'

‘It means we’re going on a journey,’ replied the Doctor, and bounded up the stairs. Romana and Duggan ran after him.

‘Where to?’ Duggan called.

‘Four hundred million years ago.’

‘Where?’

‘Don’t ask,’ the Doctor advised, hurrying down the hallway of the château.

‘But we haven’t got the time/space co-ordinates!’ Romana reminded him.

‘We don’t need them,’ the Doctor grinned. ‘The Jagaroth will leave a trace in time. And at the speed he’s travelling, we should have no trouble in catching up with him.’ He entered the lounge and stopped.

His companions came to a halt behind him, and Romana peered over his shoulder. ‘The Countess!’

The Doctor knelt beside the body and examined it briefly. ‘She’s dead,’ he murmured.

‘How?’ asked Duggan.

‘A massive, slow-moving electric shock.’ The Doctor unclipped the bracelet from her wrist. ‘From this little device, I should imagine,’ he said distastefully. He stood up and de-liberately brought his foot down hard on the bracelet, reducing it to dust.

Duggan took the opportunity to have the drink he so badly needed.

The Doctor opened up the concealed bookcase and rummaged through it before catching sight of what it was he was after lying discarded on the table. He snatched it up.

‘If anything should go wrong, I’d hate anything to happen to this,’ he told Romana and Duggan, as he stowed the leather-bound authorial manuscript of Hamlet in his coat pocket.

Within minutes they were once again running through the crowded streets of Paris.

Duggan fought madly to keep up with the two time travellers. It occurred to him that if he’d learnt anything during his time as a police officer, it was that the only people who could run faster than police were people used to running away from police.

The Doctor tried in vain to hail a taxi amidst the crowded traffic, but was ignored. ‘Is nobody interested in history?’ he shouted, but his words were drowned out in the noise of the Tuesday rush-hour.

It seemed that they would have to run all the way to the Denise René gallery after all.

The merchant banker surveyed the exhibit before him with an awkward frown. This was one of the more interesting things he had seen since his arrival in Paris on holiday last week. He had seen almost everything - he had seen a production of Faust at the Paris Opera House, he had visited the Eiffel Tower and the Nôtre Dame cathedral, he had had an abstract drawing done of himself by a man wearing a tweed suit and a beret. His visit to the Louvre had been spoilt by some stupid man who'd fainted in front of a picture - okay, he agreed that the Mona Lisa was a good painting but not to the point of fainting over it.

And now, here he was in the Denise René gallery, talking with a mysterious female fellow-Briton whom he had barely met. His colleagues back in London would never believe it.

'For me,' he said, 'one of the most curious things about this piece is its wonderful…' he searched desperately for a word that would both fit his sentence and sound impressive, '…

afunctionalism.' He smiled. Now there was an impressive word, worthy of a merchant banker of his status.

The woman nodded. 'Yes,' she said as she stared intently at the exhibit, 'yes, I see what you mean. Divorced from its function and seen purely as a piece of art, its structure of light and colour is curiously counter-pointed by the redundant vestiges of its function.'

She, too, was pleased with her little summary of the object. She could not believe she had 74

found her soul mate at last. She would never believe him when he finally confessed what he did for a living.

The merchant banker pursed his lips and nodded. 'And since it has no call to be here, the art lies in the fact that it is here.'

A moment later it wasn't. Three people pushed past, went inside it, and then it disappeared with a wheezing groaning sound.

They were both lost for words.

'Exquisite,' said the woman at last, 'absolutely exquisite.'

The central column rose and fell as the Doctor operated various controls on the TARDIS

console. Romana watched the Doctor and tried not to get in the way, while Duggan stood at the door, his mouth hanging open in amazement at the impossibly large room around him.

There was a bleep from the console. The Doctor went over to the panel it came from and checked the instrumentation, then gave a satisfied smile. ‘Ah! There is it!’

Duggan frowned and stayed where he was. ‘There what is?’

‘The Jagaroth. I’ve located him. He’s nearly arrived, but I should be able to get us there a bit before him.’ The Doctor noticed Romana eyeing the disconnected randomiser that rested on one of the control panels. ‘We won’t be needing that if we’re going to catch Scaroth.’

‘Who?’ asked Romana.

‘The Jagaroth. His name’s Scaroth. Didn’t I tell you?’

‘No.’

‘Well, I have now, so that’s all right.’

‘Yes.’

‘Good. Go on, Duggan.’

Duggan looked puzzled. It had been his permanent expression since setting foot inside the TARDIS. ‘What?’

The Doctor grinned. ‘Ask me why it’s bigger on the inside than on the out!’

‘But it is!’

‘I know that! The question is, do you? Or do you think this is all just some optical illu-sion?’

‘When you’ve seen seven Mona Lisas you’ll believe anything,’ said Duggan. ‘Tell me how it works.’

‘I’ll get K9 to explain it to you,’ the Doctor told him.

Duggan nodded, looking like he was going to cry if the world conspired to bewilder him any further today.

The Doctor turned and hollered, ‘K9!’

The inner door swung open and in trundled something Duggan could only assume was a robot dog. Presumably the name was supposed to be some form of bad pun.

The Doctor knelt down and whispered to the dog, ‘K9, how’s your laryngitis?’

‘Laryngitis is completely cured, Master,’ replied a tinny voice from within the robot dog.

‘No it isn’t!’ cried the Doctor indignantly, getting to his feet. ‘What’s happened to your voice?’

‘Master?’

‘Your voice has changed!’ This seemed to be a regular thing with his companions these days - what with Leela’s eye colour, Romana’s recent regeneration and now K9’s voice.

K9’s ears whirred as his sensors checked to see if the observation the Doctor had made 75

was accurate. ‘Affirmative, Master. Nanites have restructured vocal chords, resulting in slight voice change,’ K9 agreed.

‘Oh well,’ said the Doctor glumly. ‘I suppose I’ll have to live with it. K9, this is Duggan.’

‘Greetings, Duggan,’ said K9, and his antenna tail wagged.

‘It’s a robot dog that talks,’ said Duggan feebly.

‘Explain to Duggan how the TARDIS is bigger on the inside than on the out,’ the Doctor instructed K9.

‘No, please, don’t,’ begged Duggan, ‘I’d rather not know.’

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Suit yourself.’

‘I knew I shouldn’t have had that drink,’ Duggan muttered to himself. ‘You still haven’t explained why it will take the Jagaroth so long to travel back in time.’

‘Because there’s always time involved in time travel. Even a TARDIS will take longer to travel four hundred million years than it will four minutes. Scaroth has damaged the fast return mechanism on his machine. Rather than being instantly transported back four hundred million years, he’ll be taking the overnight train. With a bit of luck, we’ll beat him there.’

As he spoke, the time rotor came to a halt.

‘We’ve arrived,’ said the Doctor.

12

The Death of Art

Scaroth surveyed the bleak landscape with weariness. For a moment, he thought he could see something glinting across the horizon. He peered closer at the observation window.

Was that a tall blue box with a flashing light atop he could see?

No. Scaroth dismissed the thought immediately. He had been in the control room far too long; his eye was beginning to play tricks on him.

He ignored the unappealing world around him. It was of no interest to him whatsoever.

He was one of the last of a dying race.

The Doctor emerged from the TARDIS and looked around at the barren landscape.

‘Where are we?’ inquired Duggan, as he and Romana joined the Time Lord.

‘This will be the middle of the Atlantic Ocean,’ the Doctor informed them.

‘But we’re standing on land!’ protested Duggan.

‘He’s out of his depth,’ smiled Romana, making a rare pun.

The Doctor turned to the detective. ‘Duggan, we are where I promised we’d be. Four hundred million years back in Earth’s history.’ He reached into his coat and removed a brass telescope.

‘I can see why the Jagaroth wanted to leave,’ observed Romana, looking at the dreary landscape.

‘Yes,’ murmured the Doctor, concentrating on looking through the telescope.

‘Where’s Scaroth?’ she enquired.

‘He’ll be here. Ah!’ The Doctor saw a spherical object in the distance and smiled.

‘There’s the Jagaroth spaceship.’ He scowled. ‘The last of the Jagaroth - a vicious, callous, war-like race. The Universe won’t miss them.’

‘They weren’t always vicious and callous,’ Romana reminded him. ‘They were once great artists and scholars. It was only toward the end that they turned to war.’

They set off across the primeval plain, and a short time later stood looking up at the alien craft. Romana cast an eye over the damaged hull of the ship. ‘I can see why it must have exploded.’

The Doctor peered at the charred underside. ‘Yes.’

‘Its atmospheric thrust motors are disabled. The idiots will try to take off on warp drive!’

Duggan’s mouth hung open in the same way it had when he’d first entered the TARDIS. He pointed up at the craft in disbelief. ‘That’s a spaceship!’ he told the Doctor and Romana. Neither of them suggested he might be wrong.

Romana heard a squelch underfoot. She looked down. ‘Ugh! Doctor, what’s this I’ve stepped in?’

The Doctor looked down and saw the sticky pool into which she had placed her foot.

He scooped up a handful of the murky brown sludge. ‘The amniotic fluids from which all 77

life on Earth will spring,’ he said, examining the stuff in his hand with a frown. ‘The amino acids, when fused, form minute cells - cells which eventually evolve into vegetable and animal life.’ He took hold of the detective’s hand and slapped the sludge into it. ‘You, Duggan.’

Duggan wrinkled his face in disgust. ‘I come from that? That... soup?’ He shook his hand and most of the ‘soup’ fell to the ground.

The Doctor smiled. ‘Yes! Well... not that soup exactly, but from similar soup... probably over there somewhere. It’s inert, there’s no life in it yet. It needs a massive dose of radiation.’

Romana grasped what the Doctor was implying. ‘The Jagaroth spaceship?’

‘Yes,’ the Doctor confirmed. ‘The explosion that caused Scaroth to be splintered in time also caused the birth of the human race. And that’s what’s about to happen - the birth of life itself...’

‘Here?’ asked Duggan, interested. ‘While we watch?’

‘No. If we were watching we’d be in dead trouble - literally. We’ve got to stop Scaroth.’

Romana pointed behind them. ‘Look!’

In a shimmering haze of light, the Jagaroth materialised. It was still dressed in Count Scarlioni’s linen suit and holding the Countess’ gun. ‘Stop, my brothers!’ Scaroth

called up to the ship, oblivious at first to the presence of the time travellers. ‘Stop in the name of all of us!’

‘We’ve got to stop him!’ said the Doctor.

There was a low hum as the ship’s motors warmed up.

‘Keep out of my way!’ snarled Scaroth as he approached the vessel. ‘I must get to the ship!’

‘No, Scaroth!’ the Doctor insisted as the three stood in the Jagaroth’s path. ‘You can’t!’

‘I must stop myself pressing the button!’ Scaroth shouted as the hum of the motors became louder and louder.

‘No, Scaroth!’ shouted the Doctor as the motors roared. ‘No! You pressed it once.

You’ve thrown the dice, Scaroth, it’s too late for you now. You don’t get another throw!’

‘I will be splintered in time again, and my people will be killed!’

‘No!’ The Doctor pleaded with the Jagaroth. ‘The explosion you set off will give birth to the human race! The moment your race is killed, another is born. That is what has happened - and will happen.’

The Jagaroth would have scowled had he a face flexible enough to do so. ‘What do I care about the human race? Pathetic scum! The tools of my salvation!’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘The product of your destruction,’ he corrected. ‘History cannot change! It cannot!’

‘I will change it!’ screamed Scaroth. He raised the gun and fired. The Doctor, Romana and Duggan all scattered at exactly the right time and the bullet whizzed past.

Scaroth turned to where the Doctor was now. ‘We can’t let you change history,’ the Doctor said gravely. ‘The human race has too much to achieve, more than you Jagaroth ever could!’ Scaroth’s finger tightened on the trigger again but nothing happened. He pulled the trigger again and again but to no avail.

‘You see,’ continued the Doctor. ‘For all your mighty intellect, you don’t even know how many bullets a revolver can fire before it runs out of them!’

Duggan, looking at the vestiges of slime on his hand, saw his chance and took it.

It was a choice between perishing on the barren surface, and taking their chances on the 78

ship surviving the journey to another more favourable world. Scaroth took the gamble.

Reaching forward, he depressed the lift-off button on his console.

No... cried a voice that seemed to come from within Scaroth's head. No, don't press it...

don't press the button...

The Doctor stared at the unconscious Jagaroth and then back at Duggan.

'Duggan,' he said at last, 'I think that was probably the most important punch in history!'

Scaroth's body shimmered as he began to stir, and then faded from sight.

'His two minutes are up,' said Romana, 'he's gone back to the château.'

'The ship's about to take off,' the Doctor reminded them urgently. 'Let's get back to the TARDIS.'

The three sturdy legs on the lower half of the ship retracted inwards as the Jagaroth craft rose slowly into the air and hovered a few hundred metres above the ground. The silver bands around its centre vibrated and spun. The ship began to rise higher and higher into the atmosphere.

Scaroth activated the main drive. A loud grinding, humming sound filled the cabin, and the ship began to vibrate alarmingly.

Scaroth felt the g-forces from the warp thrust tugging at his weakened body. His stomach churned, and his head felt dizzy, but he had achieved what he feared was impossible -

the ship had taken off.

Then the inevitable happened - something went wrong.

They reached the TARDIS as a sandstorm whipped up by the Jagaroth craft's lift-off blew around them, and hurried inside.

The last thing Scaroth heard was the sound of his people crying out in pain and then being suddenly silenced. He felt the distortion of the ship's unstable warp field as it enveloped the control chamber, tearing at his body; dragging him into the vortex of the space/time continuum...

The TARDIS dematerialised just as the Jagaroth ship exploded in a ball of flame, creating a blinding white glare that filled the sky for a full minute.

The long war was over.

'I don't know about you,' said Leonardo, 'but I think they look pretty bloody similar.'

It was 1505 and they were in Firenze. Duggan had called it Florence and nearly had a punch-up with a famous Italian painter as a result.

There were seven Mona Lisas in the studio, displayed proudly side by side.

'I suppose,' confessed Romana, 'that it is a very pretty picture.'

'A computer might have been able to duplicate them identically,' said the Doctor, 'but couldn't invest them with any soul.'

'I must get me one of those,' said Shakespeare. 'It would make all the revisions so much easier.'

'No,' the Doctor retorted. They had been debating over the draft manuscript of Hamlet and the Doctor had been trying to argue his mixed metaphor case while Will was refusing to reinstate the cut lines. 'The beauty about art is that it is so flawed. If you could use a computer to get rid of all the blemishes, it would take away the humanity of the thing. So 79

long as there are original drafts, we can see your genius and the silly bits you got rid of it in the composition process.'

'Well,' said Will, 'I don't want them to see the silly bits. 'Take arms against a sea of troubles' is staying, Doctor, and as for that bit with the dog…what were you thinking?'

'Sorry, K9,' murmured the Doctor.

'Apology accepted, master,' replied K9 as Shakespeare set fire to the manuscript.

Napoleon raised a mug of beer. He had a chicken drumstick in the other hand. 'To Paris!' he toasted, and there was the clink of glasses.

'Watch this,' said Lisa del Giocondo when they'd all downed their pints. She grabbed a stool, rushed up to the assembled paintings, sat on the stool and automatically struck up a pose identical to that in the paintings. They all roared with laughter.

'Pretty good, huh?' she grinned. 'I've had enough bloody practice at it by now!'

In Paris, 1979, Hermann came back into the laboratory, gun in hand, searching for the Doctor and his two companions. Upstairs, he had discovered the body of the Countess, and he held them responsible for her death.

As he searched the lab, the machine sprang back into life, and to Hermann's horror, a creature materialised kneeling between the projectors. It wore the Count's clothes - but had the head of something repulsive. He choked as the creature got to its feet. Hermann raised his gun.

'No, Hermann!' the creature implored. 'It's me!'

But Hermann was oblivious to any claims of identity the creature may have made. He fired wildly, pumping as many bullets as his firearm would allow in the creature's direction. A bullet caught one of the projectors, which shattered.

The explosion that followed destroyed the machine, Scaroth and Hermann. It set alight the highly reactive chemicals in the storage cupboards. It managed to break the supports that held up the château.

It also managed to destroy the Mona Lisa that sat innocently on a stand in the laboratory…

Epilogue

PAINTING RECOVERED IN CHÂTEAU FIRE

Police searching the remains of the château belonging to Count Carlos Scarlioni, a well-known and highly respected art collector, today recovered the stolen picture of the Mona Lisa.

The house was destroyed yesterday afternoon by a fire which is believed to have originated in the cellar. The famous painting was located in a tiny brick room in the basement of the château, along with the charred frames of five other paintings. It is not believed that any of these paintings were in any way valuable.

Count Scarlioni is believed to have perished in the fire, but as yet no trace of his remains have been found. Two bodies have been recovered from the fire and identified as those of the Countess Scarlioni and the Scarlionis' butler.

The police are declining to comment at this stage on the possibility that the Count was connected with the theft of the Leonardo da Vinci masterpiece. Investigations are continu-ing.

- The Paris Chronicle, 20 May 1979

'The one nearest the wall?'

'Yes! It was the only one that survived the fire.'

'Never!'

'Yes!'

There was disbelief in Duggan's voice. 'But it's a fake! You can't hang a fake Mona Lisa in the Louvre!'

It was late on Sunday afternoon. The Doctor, Romana and Duggan stood on the observation deck of the Eiffel tower, surveying the City of Life around them.

'How can it be a fake if Leonardo painted it?' asked the Doctor.

Duggan scowled. 'With the words 'this is a fake!' written on the canvas in felt-tip pen?'

The Doctor nodded. 'Yes, but it doesn't affect what it looks like!'

Duggan sighed, infuriated. 'It doesn't matter what it looks like!'

The Doctor raised an eyebrow. 'Doesn't it? Some people would say that was the whole point of a painting.'

‘But they’ll find out!’ protested Duggan. ‘They’ll x-ray it!’

‘Serves them right!’ snapped the Doctor. ‘If they have to x-ray a painting to find out whether it’s good or not, they might as well have it painted by a computer.’

Romana nodded. ‘Like we have at home.’

Duggan frowned as the Doctor agreed with his companion. ‘Home,’ he said, a note of concern in his tone. ‘Where do you two come from?’

‘From?’ The Doctor shrugged. ‘Here and there... mostly there. I suppose the best way to find out where you come from is to find out where you’re going and work backwards.’

‘All right, then,’ said Duggan. ‘Where are you going?’

The Doctor leaned close to Duggan and whispered, ‘I don’t have the faintest idea.’

Romana shook her head disdainfully. ‘Neither do I.’

The Doctor smiled a wide, beaming smile. ‘Goodbye, Duggan,’ he said simply. He shook Duggan’s hand, and Romana kissed him lightly on the cheek. Duggan eyed the pair with the same bewilderment that had prevailed ever since he’d met them.

Then they were gone. Duggan could hear their voices.

‘Where are we going?’

‘Are you talking philosophically or geographically?’

‘Philosophically.’

‘I haven’t the faintest idea.’

‘Oh. How about geographically, then?’

‘I still haven’t the faintest idea...’

‘Shall we take the lift or fly?’

‘Let’s not be ostentatious.’

‘All right, let’s fly then.’

‘That would be silly. We’ll take the lift.’

The voices trailed off into the breeze. They must, Duggan decided, have taken the lift.

A few minutes later he had wandered over to look out over the Parc du Champ de Mars, a long strip of flat green parkland stretching out from the base of the tower. He stood for a while, not knowing quite what to do next, but aware that, sooner rather than later, he would have to face the difficult task of presenting his report to the British Art Society. He thought he could see two tiny figures that might have been the Time Lords striding away across the park. Then they turned around.

Although it would have seemed impossible for them to see anyone at that distance, let alone single him out, they did. The Doctor waved, and yelled out something that sounded remarkably like, 'Bye bye, Duggan!'

Duggan smiled and watched the two figures long after they had finally disappeared from sight. And then he did something that might have seemed out of character for him to the Time Lords. Atop the observation platform of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, 1979, Detective Sergeant (Retired) James Duggan laughed long and hard for a good minute.

A while later he wandered the streets of Paris aimlessly, feeling light-headed, exhausted and relieved. He came to a postcard stall indistinguishable from the hundreds of other postcard stalls he'd passed every day for the whole time he'd been in Paris. And he bought a postcard.

After paying for it, Duggan pledged to keep it for the rest of his life; after all, it was his only reminder of the Doctor and Romana, Count Scarlioni and his wife, the château, the Jagaroth, the fact that a fake painting was now hanging in the Louvre…or rather a genuine painting with the words 'THIS IS A FAKE!' written under it, and what was generally the wildest, craziest, mixed-up case he would ever undertake throughout his career as a private detective.

Duggan looked at the postcard with the picture of the Mona Lisa on it once more; then he put it inside his trenchcoat and walked away into the evening of a Paris Spring.

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When the Doctor and Romana take a break

from their travels in Paris 1979, a holiday is

far from what they get.

Strange things are happening: lost art treasures are turning up, secret experiments are causing distortions in time, and the greatest art fraud in history is about to reach its fruition.

When the time travellers team up with Duggan, a British detective, they learn that everything points to Count Carlos Scarlioni, a wealthy and famous art collector who is somehow much, much more than he seems…

If Scarlioni is allowed to succeed, his plans will result in all life on Earth ceasing to have ever existed...

This is an unofficial and unauthorised fan publication.

No profits have been derived from this book. Not for resale.

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